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THE NEW-CENTURY BIBLE

THE MINOR PROPHETS

HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, OBADIAH, JONAH, AND MICAH

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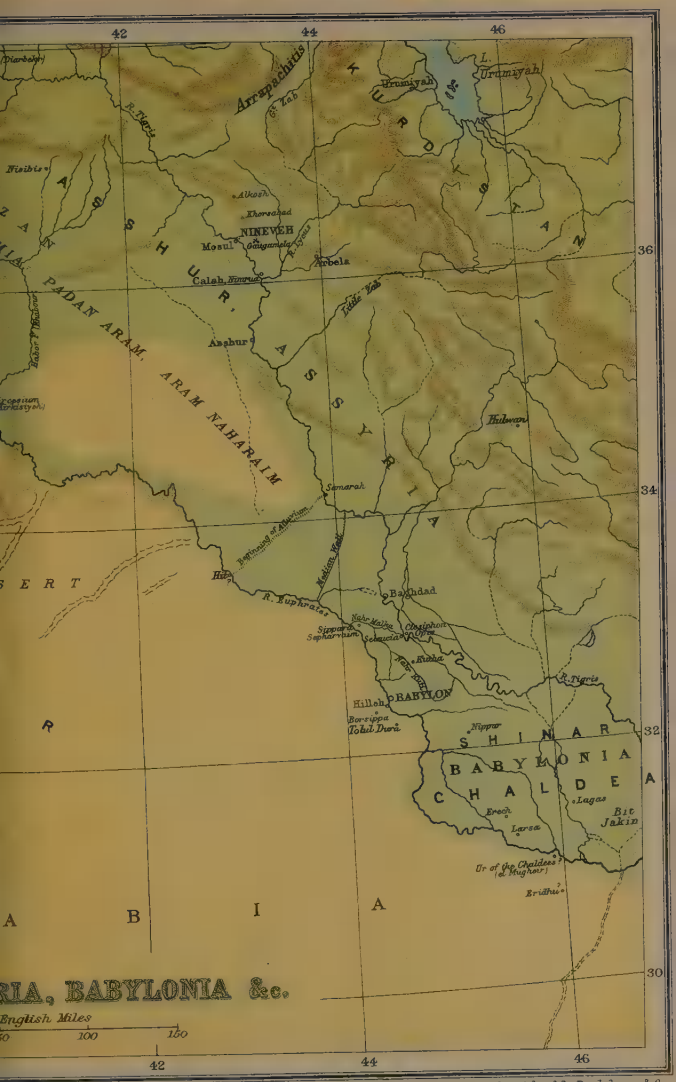

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The Minor Prophets

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

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part I

INTRODUCTION
REVISED VERSION WITH NOTES
INDEX AND MAP

EDITED BY
REV. R. F. HORTON, M.A., D.D.

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SYRIA, ASSYRIA, AND BABYLONIA.

THE MINOR PROPHETS

HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, OBADIAH JONAH, MICAH

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE MINOR PROPHETS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THIS volume contains the first six of what are called the *Minor Prophets*: in the Hebrew Canon that means the first half of a single volume; for the writings from Hosea to Malachi are all classed together as *The Book of the Twelve*. At a very early period the names attached to the several sections of the book were taken to be those of twelve prophets; hence we get the allusion in Ecclus. xlix. 10, '*Also of the twelve prophets may the bones flourish again out of their place. And he comforted Jacob, and delivered them by confidence of hope*[1].' But a careful study reveals the fact that while there are peculiarly distinct persons, whose writings are collected in the group, e. g. Hosea, Amos, Micah, some of the names are quite shadowy, e. g. Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi, and in some cases the date and circumstances of the document are impossible to fix, e. g. Joel.

The best way to regard this book therefore is as an anthology of prophetic utterances, unfortunately not arranged in chronological order, ranging over the whole period of prophetic activity in Israel, viz. from the eighth to the fourth century B.C. or even later. The book does not precede or follow what might be called the book of the *Four Major Prophets*, it runs parallel with it. Amos

[1] Cf. 2 Esdras i. 39, 40, 'Unto whom I will give for leaders, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Oseas, Amos, and Micheas, Joel, Abdias, and Jonas, Nahum, and Abacuc, Sophonias, Aggaeus, Zachary, and Malachy, which is called also the angel of the Lord.'

and Hosea are the earliest written prophecies, Micah is the contemporary of Isaiah; the rest of the fragments are spread over the remaining period of Hebrew history till after the Exile. Joel may be long after the Exile, almost as late as Daniel. There are passages even in Micah which may have been added in the latest period.

This feature last referred to must be constantly borne in mind. Even where we get genuinely autograph writings, such as Amos, Hosea, and Micah, it appears that later fragments have been added or inserted by the prophetic hands which edited the prophecies and compiled the collection.

It is the legitimate work of the lower criticism to correct the text, which in many cases, especially in Hosea, is very faulty, and often unintelligible, a fact which accounts for the neglect of *The Book of the Twelve* in the religion and worship of the Church. And it is the legitimate work of the higher criticism to distinguish the different authorship and dates of the several parts of the whole volume. Finality is not reached, and perhaps it never can be. But already many a passage glows with new beauty and carries home new truth as it is disentangled from its surroundings and set in its proper place and period (see e. g. the last chapter of Micah), and Bible students would do well to notice how criticism is hallowed in its dealings with such a book as this—how, so far from taking the Bible from us, it gives it to us for the first time intelligible and therefore interesting.

The following Commentary makes constant use of Pusey, who followed Pococke, and closed the older period of dogmatic exegesis: but it is based on Wellhausen, Nowack (in the *Hand-Kommentar*), and Prof. George Adam Smith, supplemented by Prof. Driver and Prof. Cheyne wherever their help is available, and checked by the more conservative work of Keil and Orelli. Pusey's great work can never be out of date; it is rich in erudite illustration from the Fathers, from other Church writers,

and from such travellers and scientific authorities as throw light upon the subject. And, further, it glows with a beautiful piety; it is, like Godet's commentaries on the New Testament, an applied homily all along. But, on the other hand, it is dogmatic and uncritical; it never tells us what Scripture intended, but only what the Church has read out of, or into, Scripture.

The modern commentators are without Pusey's charm, but they give us the solid foundations on which some future Pusey may rear a structure no less pious and more durable. Prof. George Adam Smith in the *Expositor's Bible*, by his brilliance and sympathy and practical applications, has anticipated in part that coming Pusey; but the work both of the lower and of the higher criticism must reach more assured results before a commentator can write with Pusey's unfaltering dogmatic confidence, and rear on the new foundations structures as imposing and as authoritative as the old. The brief Commentary in this volume can claim only this merit, that it regards with an equal admiration the work of the old school and that of the new, and it endeavours within its narrow limits to give the results of combining the best features of both.

Chronology.

The dates covered by the six prophets dealt with in this book are given according to Prof. Marti's Table in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (article, Chronology). There are seven fixed points in the period from the time of Amos to the fall of Jerusalem, established by the exact Assyrian Chronology. The other dates are conjectural, and may be disputed.

Certain Dates.	Probable Dates.	
B.C.	B.C.	
	789–740	Uzziah reigns over Judah.
	782–743	Jeroboam II reigns over Israel.
	743	Zechariah, Shallum over Israel.
	742–737	Menahem over Israel.
	739–734	Jotham reigns over Judah.
738		Menahem's tribute to Tiglath-pileser III.
	736	Pekahiah reigns over Israel.
	735–730	Pekah over Israel.
734		Ahaz's tribute to Tiglath-pileser.
	733–721	Ahaz reigns over Judah.
732		Ahaz's homage at Damascus to Tiglath-pileser.
	729–721	Hoshea reigns over Israel.
721		Samaria captured by Sargon.
	720–693	Hezekiah reigns over Judah.
701		Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem.
	692–639	Manasseh reigns over Judah.
	638	Amon.
	637–608	Josiah.
	608	Battle of Megiddo. Jehoahaz reigns.
	607–597	Jehoiakim reigns over Judah.
604		First year of Nebuchadnezzar (604–562).
	597	Jehoiachin king over Judah.
	596–586	Zedekiah.
586		Fall of Jerusalem.

HOSEA

INTRODUCTION

AND

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

'The other prophets explored the kingdom of God, Hosea took it by storm' (Prof. G. A. Smith).

HOSEA

INTRODUCTION

ALL that we know of Hosea (= 'Salvation,' identical with the original of Joshua, Num. xiii. 8, and with the last king of Israel, 2 Kings xv. 30) is gathered from the little book which bears his name. The opening verse is the title to the book, when or by whom appended we cannot say; but there is nothing to indicate that the editor did more than infer the date from the contents of the book itself (*Encycl. Biblica*, ii. 2121). Jeroboam II was the fourth and most successful ruler of the house of Jehu; and ch. i–iii, referring to the luxury and vice of that prosperous reign, and denouncing the ruin of that violent house, were evidently composed in the last years of Jeroboam II (782–743 B.C.). The contemporary king of Judah was Uzziah (789–740 B.C.). But as ch. i. 7 seems to refer to the great deliverance under Hezekiah, the editor concluded that Hosea was living and prophesying through the reigns of the kings of Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

And ch. iv–xiv evidently date from the years of confusion which followed on the death of Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom. Zechariah, in whose person the promise made to the house of Jehu came to an end, was deposed by Shallum, and he in his turn by Menahem, who sought the help of the Assyrian king Pul (Tiglath-pileser), 2 Kings xv. 19 f., to strengthen his throne (viii. 9). Another party in Samaria sought the help of Egypt (xii. 1). Menahem reigned from 742 to 737, and was succeeded by his son Pekahiah. But Pekahiah was murdered by Pekah, who united the forces of Israel with

those of Rezin king of Damascus in an attack on Judah (Isa. vii). In 729, with the connivance of Tiglath-pileser, Hoshea deposed and murdered Pekah, but then rebelled against his Assyrian suzerain and entered into treasonable negotiations with So (i.e. Sabako) king of Egypt. The Assyrians attacked and besieged Samaria, under Shalmaneser, who had succeeded Tiglath-pileser; and after three years the city capitulated to Sargon, and the Northern Kingdom came to an end, 721 B.C.

The echoes of this stormy period are in Hosea's prophecy. But there is no reference to the conflict of the Northern Kingdom with Judah, or to the Assyrian disaster in 701 B.C. If therefore the title is correct in saying that Hosea was still prophesying in the reign of Hezekiah, we must assume that his later prophecies were not written, or at any rate were not incorporated in his book. His date, then, may be roughly fixed thus: He began his prophetic work about 750 and ended it about 720, but his recorded prophecies do not indicate with any clearness the course of events after 729 (Nowack, p. 4). Dr. Pusey's estimate of the prophetic ministry of Hosea as extending over seventy years is very interesting and impressive, but disappears before the chronological readjustment of later scholars.

The prophecies contained in our book fall into two distinct groups.

1. Ch. i–iii form a narrative of events, which must be taken literally, and the events themselves constitute an allegorical prophecy. We are to conceive the prophet as passing through the singular domestic experience which he describes, and then recognizing that God has permitted these things to happen to him as a lesson of judgement and mercy to Israel. Robertson Smith presented the most probable explanation of the position, the explanation which best reconciles the psychology and the theology of the prophetic experience, when he maintained that Gomer-bath-Diblaim was a real woman; no allegorical

interpretation of her name is offered. Hosea married her, and she became unfaithful, 'a wife of whoredom.' In the bitter experience of her unfaithfulness, and in the strong love and pity which persisted in his own heart for the erring wife, the Spirit of God taught the prophet to read, on the one hand, the unfaithfulness of the land of Israel, and, on the other hand, the tender compassion of God to the people whom He had espoused. This part of the book ends with the pathetic picture of the prophet buying back his wife from the humiliating captivity into which she had plunged herself, and keeping her, not as a wife, but as a ward, still loved and protected in spite of her iniquities. In this act of grace the feeling of God to His guilty children is exquisitely expressed.

2. Ch. iv–xiv. In the later part of the book, except for an occasional reference, the allegory of the domestic tragedy is left on one side, and the prophet proceeds in a succession of brief, pregnant, and sometimes unconnected utterances (Jerome called Hosea *commaticus*, consisting of short clauses), to denounce the political and social corruptions of his time, and to plead with the people to return to their God. The sins of Israel are (1) the worship of Baalim and of images—and for this corruption of the cultus the priests are primarily responsible; they have not taught the people that what God requires is not formal offerings, but mercy and the knowledge of God (vi. 6): (2) the fall and corruption of the kings who followed one another in varying degrees of iniquity, but were all apostate from the great idea of the theocracy: (3) the political alliances with Assyria and Egypt in place of reliance upon God.

For all these things, which constitute the breach of the marriage-tie between Israel and God, the prophet calls on the people to repent. This repentance will not be achieved without another sojourn in the wilderness, and the loss of all the political and religious privileges which have made Israel great. But the love to his

unfaithful wife inspires the prophet with the confidence that God will yet draw Israel into the desert, and there win back the alienated heart.

The book ends with an appeal, passionate and tender, in which the voices of the prophets and of God and of the repentant people form a great amoebean symphony. The fall of the nation, and the deposition of the apostate kings, are forgotten, and nothing remains but that eternal and spiritual drama transacted between the soul and God, which is the underlying substance and the overarching purpose of all Holy Scripture.

It is this permanent element, irrespective of the date, the origin, and the historical circumstances of the book, which to our fathers constituted the sole value of a prophetic writing. But this element is not lost or weakened, when we, at the foundation of the spiritual structure, seek to understand, more curiously than our fathers did, the conditions which gave rise to the prophecy and the human elements which mingle with its composition.

While no one would dispute the authenticity and integrity of the book as a whole, there are scholars who regard ch. xiv as the work of a later hand, though Robertson Smith ascribed it to Hosea, and Nowack, the latest and best commentator in Germany, is not inclined to entirely reject it. On the other hand, many verses and passages seem to have been added after the time of the prophet, and the arrangement of the oracles is sometimes so strange that we cannot ascribe it to Hosea himself.

The references to Judah (i. 7, 11, iii. 5, iv. 15, v. 5, 10, 12–14, vi. 4, 11, viii. 14, x. 11, xi. 12, xii. 2) read like interpolations by an editor who felt the exclusive reference of Hosea to the Northern Kingdom unsatisfactory; and in some instances Judah has been substituted for Israel or Ephraim (e. g. v. 10, 12–14, vi. 4, x. 11, xii. 2 (3).

On the other hand, it seems too arbitrary to say, with the article in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, that all the

hopeful passages (i. 10—ii. 1, ii. 16–23, iii. 5, v. 15—vi. 3, vi. 11—vii. 1, xi. 10f., xiv. 1–9) are added by a later reviser, and that Hosea's outlook was one of unrelieved gloom. This not only ignores the spiritual quality of the revelation of God generally as the thought of one who in wrath remembers mercy, but it forgets that the vital experience of Hosea, the pity for his fallen wife, which distinguishes him from the stern moralist, his contemporary Amos, and makes him, with the possible exception of Jeremiah, the tenderest of all the prophets, had opened up to him the whole mystery of the Divine forgiveness, and of the ultimate restoration of the apostate people.

SYNOPSIS

I. The Title. i. 1.

II. The First Division: a narrative, ch. i and iii, with an exposition of it inserted, ch. ii.

(1) Israel's whoredoms with the Baals, i. e. the calf images (cf. viii. 6), ii. 2–5.

(2) Israel's perplexities as Lo-ruhamah ('the unpitied'), ii. 6–13.

(3) Israel's exile and discipline in the wilderness, ii. 14–18.

(4) Israel's repentance and new espousals, Lo-ammi changed into Ammi, ii. 19–23.

III. The Second Division. iv–xiv.

Israel's apostasy and unfaithfulness to his God.

(1) A people in Moral Decay. iv—vii. 7 mainly occupied with a denunciation of the perverted cultus. There is no knowledge of God in the land. The spirit of whoredom; Baals at the central sanctuary and at the local shrines have taken the place of Yahweh; these are Israel's paramours.

(2) A people in Political Decay. Ch. vii. 8—x mainly occupied with the internal politics of Israel and with the external alliances, both equally violations of the true trust in God.

(3) Ch. xi. 1–11. The fatherhood and humanity of God.

(4) Ch. xi. 12—xiii. The final argument.

(5) Ch. xiv. The great and affecting call to repentance.

The message of Hosea, the contribution which he makes to religion, is this: God loves His people. Amos speaks of the righteousness of Yahweh, Hosea calls it love. God is spiritual and He is holy. What He demands is not sacrifice and ritual, but piety of heart towards Himself, expressing itself in 'mercy' to men. In the wilderness at the Exodus, Israel first found this personal relation with God, and 'it is in the wilderness that it shall be perfectly realized again, when Israel, destitute of all sacramental tokens of Yahweh's favour, land, corn and wine, shall feel that he possesses God Himself, and shall respond as in the early days' (Prof. A. B. Davidson).

Such an inward conception of religion transcends the Old Testament standpoint, and is in the deepest sense an evangelic prophecy; while the mode of realizing the spiritual by means of suffering, privation, Gethsemane and Calvary, becomes a striking anticipation of the method of our redemption.

HOSEA

THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea the 1
son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and
Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam
the son of Joash, king of Israel.

When the LORD spake at the first by Hosea, the LORD 2
said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom

---

i. 1. *The Title.*

1. The word of the LORD: i. e. Yahweh. The sacred name יהוה is usually rendered 'LORD.'

the son of Beeri. If Hosea had not told us his father's name fame would not have recorded it. The agricultural references in the book imply that the family was reared close to the soil. Jewish tradition gratified its pride and ingenuity by identifying Beeri (= 'my well') with Beerah the Reubenite prince (1 Chron. v. 6). A Jewish legend says that Hosea died in Babylon, and the body was carried back to Galilee and buried in Safed (Neubauer, *Géogr. du Talmud*, 227).

in the days of Uzziah . . . Hezekiah. That would bring the date down at least twenty-three years after the death of Jeroboam. But the clause was evidently inserted by a later hand, as its place before 'in the days of Jeroboam' indicates. (See Introd.)

in the days of Jeroboam II: 782–743 B.C., i. e. 750 or thereabouts. This date may well have been given by the prophet himself for the first three chapters. But considering his close connexion with the Northern Kingdom, and his allusions to the political conditions after Jeroboam's death, it seems probable that if Hosea had himself given the date, he would have inserted the names of Zechariah, who succeeded Jeroboam, and of the usurpers who followed Zechariah. (2 Kings xiv–xvi.)

i. 2–9. *Hosea's marriage as the beginning of his prophetic life.*

2. by Hosea may mean 'with' Hosea. See Num. xii. 2–6; Zech. i. 9. More probably it means 'through Hosea': cf. 1 Kings xxii. 28.

a wife of whoredom. Everything, as Wellhausen says, tends to show that Gomer-bath-Diblaim was only a 'wife of whoredom' after her marriage, and the birth at any rate of one of

and children of whoredom: for the land doth commit
3 great whoredom, departing from the LORD. So he went
and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; and she con-
4 ceived, and bare him a son. And the LORD said unto
him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and
I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of
Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel

her children. She was not a whore; but when Hosea had married her she became an adulteress (iii. 1). This brought home to the prophet the truth which he had to deliver. Yahweh espoused Israel originally as a chaste maiden; the sins were subsequent to the covenant. Pusey tries to justify the marriage of a whore by Divine command: 'we must not imagine things to be unworthy of God because they do not commend themselves to us.' But this hard saying is not required here. It was only on reflection, when Gomer's character had become manifest, that Hosea saw how this divinely ordered marriage was the symbol of Israel's apostasy from God, and his own love for the erring wife was the prophecy of God's unfailing compassion to Israel.

3. Gomer the daughter of Diblaim. Pusey's interpretation of Gomer as 'completeness' and Diblaim as 'a double lump of figs' is very doubtful. The interest of the names is rather that they are shown to be historical by the fact that they have no allegorical meaning, and they reveal the custom of the humbler folk in selecting names which did not, like the more distinguished names of that period, include the name of God, El, or Jah.

4. Jezreel: *lit.* 'God sows,' ii. 22. The immediate reference is to 2 Kings x. 11, the slaughter of the house of Ahab carried out by Jehu at the command of God. For that vengeance on a guilty dynasty Jehu was continued on the throne to the fourth generation; Jeroboam II was the third. But the guilt of the cruelty and self-seeking which characterized the execution of the sentence remained, and was now to be expiated in the fall of the house of Jehu. But while the name Jezreel was given to the child as a reminder of the ancient guilt of a hundred years ago, it was also a reminder that the disaster which should avenge it would occur in the same place, that plain of decisive battles which stretches from Mount Carmel to the Jordan. We do not know of any fulfilment of this forecast. Pusey's attempt to find it in x. 14 is forced. The name Jezreel also, in spite of the threat, contained also a promise: Yahweh would sow again His scattered and uptorn people.

and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease.

to cease. And it shall come to pass at that day, that 5
I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.
And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And 6
the LORD said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for
I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, that
I should in any wise pardon them. But I will have 7
mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by
the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor

Wellhausen, followed by Nowack, insists that this prophecy was not exactly fulfilled, because the house of Israel did not perish with the house of Jehu, but survived for ten or twelve years longer under the shadowy and inglorious usurpers who followed Zechariah. But there is nothing in the text to show that the house of Israel was to perish at the same time as the house of Jehu, and if the prophet had intended such a synchronism, when he came to write his prophecies after the fall of Zechariah, and while the house of Israel still dragged on its inglorious existence, he would have corrected his words. The name of this first-born child, therefore, while not yet a reproach to the mother, and while containing within it a seed of mercy, was a warning that Jehu's house should fall for 'those old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago,' and that the dynasty of the Northern Kingdom should perish, if not by the same blow, very soon afterwards.

6. Lo-ruhamah (Rom. ix. 25; 1 Pet. ii. 10). The birth of the daughter indicates a fresh discovery of the wife's perfidy, and therefore a more hopeless punishment of the people symbolized. It is an awful moment when we find that we have drifted beyond the mercies of God. And here the threat is of an irretrievable disaster. The Northern Kingdom disappeared from history; its people were irrevocably scattered. The Ten Tribes, as we commonly call them, melted away like the morning dew.

7. Wellhausen unhesitatingly pronounces this and the other verses relating to Judah interpolations (so Prof. G. A. Smith, p. 213). To this judgement in the present instance Nowack assents. The statement interrupts the narrative. The phrase **the LORD their God** is later than Hosea. And further, the description of deliverance refers to the rout of Sennacherib in 701 (2 Kings xix; Isa. xxxvii). On the other hand, if Hosea lived till the time of Hezekiah, as the title asserts, he might himself have made this interpolation. In any case it is fortunate that we retain the *textus receptus*, and have not to accept Wellhausen's text mutilated by these subjective judgements.

by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.
8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived,
9 and bare a son. And *the* LORD said, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your *God*.
10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor num-

8. when she had weaned: that in the East means three years. Wellhausen rightly says this is a mark of historical reality, that such an interval occurred between the births of Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi.

9. Lo-ammi. The third birth indicates the complete rejection of the people. By a slight and plausible change in the Hebrew 'I will not be yours' becomes 'I will not be your God.'

Remembering the covenant relation which was the pride and glory of Israel, we can imagine no sentence more terrible than this repudiation on the part of God. And we can only admire the courage of the prophet who dared to announce to his contemporaries so unpalatable a truth. We cannot wonder that the prophet's life was, as he indicates, one of persecution and danger.

These three children of Gomer were a standing sign and threat to the luxurious, oppressive, and idolatrous generation of Jeroboam II.

10. In the Hebrew the second chapter begins here (see marg.), and the paragraph i. 10—ii. 1 is obviously one utterance. It is equally clear that the utterance is in glaring contradiction with the severe and irreversible judgements just passed in i. 6, 9. Accordingly, modern commentators, Wellhausen and Nowack, recognize the paragraph as the addition of an exilic writer. Prof. G. A. Smith, on the other hand, says that it cannot be exilic, cf. verse 11, and may easily be Hosea's own, but the paragraph is not in its right place here. Probably if ancient books had been published and edited like ours, such a paragraph would have been, not inserted in the text, but added in the margin or in a footnote. The exilic editor, who knew the spirit of the second Isaiah and Jeremiah, saw the light of promise which was hidden from the sad eyes of Hosea.

But all this is subjective criticism. And it is quite possible that the original prophet himself had these swift transitions from judgement to mercy, so that he never pronounced a doom on his people but immediately the mercy of God broke in upon him like a new dawn (cf. N. T. use of the passage 1 Pet. ii. 10; Rom. ix. 25).

in the place: i. e. in that land of Palestine from which the

bered; and it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God. And 11
the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel. Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; 2
and to your sisters, Ruhamah.

Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not my wife, 2

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house of Israel was to be driven by the Assyrian. Pusey's mystical interpretation is 'the place of the Dispersion,' 1 Pet. i. 1.

11. the children of Judah and the children of Israel . . . shall go up from the land. This reuniting of the divided kingdoms (cf. iii. 5) is a bold prophecy for the time of Hosea, but it would be equally bold for an exilic prophet, writing when the Northern Kingdom had been dissipated and lost. The **one head** was never realized until Christ came (cf. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, xxxvii. 22).

The land mentioned, if the passage were exilic, would mean the land of exile. But in the mouth of Hosea, who does not mention the Exile, it could only refer to Palestine. And though the phrase **go up** is used of the return from exile (Ezra ii. 1, 59, vii. 6; Neh. xii. 1, &c.), it could be used of any expedition undertaken by the united and victorious people. Mystically it may refer to the final ascent into the land of our desire.

the day of Jezreel: i.e. the first-born of Hosea. This prophecy reverses the ominous names of his children. Jezreel means no longer the scene of massacre and threatened vengeance, but 'God sows' (see ii. 22); Lo-ammi becomes Ammi, Lo-ruhamah, Ruhamah. The prophecy may point to the 'seed of the woman' and the harvest of Christ.

ii. **1. Ammi:** i.e. my people.

Ruhamah: i.e. a woman who has been pitied.

ii. 2–13. *The threats against guilty Israel under the image of the unfaithful wife, addressed to the people of the land under the image of the polluted children.*

ii. 2–5. *Israel's whoredoms with the Baals.*

2. The whoredom is the worship of the Baals, cf. viii. 6. Amos still admitted that the worship of his time was the worship of Yahweh, though corrupted. But Hosea relentlessly declares that it was not the worship of Yahweh at all, though the people thought it was. That is the interpretation of **she is not my wife, neither am I her husband.**

neither am I her husband: and let her put away her
whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from be-
3 tween her breasts; lest I strip her naked, and set her as
in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilder-
ness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst;
4 yea, upon her children will I have no mercy; for they
5 be children of whoredom. For their mother hath played
the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shame-
fully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give
me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine

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from her face . . . between her breasts. The image, taken from the finery with which the whore bedecked herself, refers to the amulets, charms, &c., which in the corrupted worship the people wore.

3. The punishment of an adulteress was stripping. Ezek. xvi. 38, 39. In the interpretation it is a threat of the wasting and depopulation of the guilty land by the failure of the rains and of the harvests. Ezek. xvi. 23–43 seems to be an elaboration of this passage of the earlier prophet.

4. upon her children: in verse 2 they are addressed, here they are spoken of. These sudden transitions and ejaculations, which mark the style of Hosea, tempt commentators (e. g. Nowack) to disentangle and rearrange the verses, treating as interpolation whatever interrupts the even flow of the discourse. But it is doubtful whether these ingenious reconstructions are successful; and they spoil the inimitable succession and play of conflicting emotions which make the attraction, if also the difficulty, of Hosea.

5. my lovers: i. e. the Baals. The primitive Canaanitic ideas survived in the worship of Yahweh, and superstition traced the fruitfulness of the land to charms and rites which belonged to the older cultus, just as numberless superstitions survive in agricultural England to-day, or, to take a more exact parallel, just as the feasts, the ceremonies, and the ideas of Paganism are retained in the worship of Mary and the saints. The Baal-feasts were in name transferred to Yahweh; in ethical principles and results they belonged to the Baals still. The Asherim and the Mazzeboth were in theory transformed for the worship of Yahweh; in practice they had transformed the worship of Yahweh itself (cf. ix. 4). So the calves which the people regarded as symbols of Yahweh were to Hosea merely idols (viii. 5, x. 5, xiii. 2). We must understand the prophet therefore to be denouncing, not

oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up 6
thy way with thorns, and I will make a fence against
her, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall 7
follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them;
and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then
shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband;
for then was it better with me than now. For she did 8
not know that I gave her the corn, and the wine, and
the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which
they used for Baal. Therefore will I take back my corn 9
in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof,
and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should
have covered her nakedness. And now will I discover 10
her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall
deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her 11
mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her sab-

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a conscious apostasy and idolatry, but a corruption of the worship which to his inspired vision was idolatry and apostasy, very much as a Protestant denounces the prostration before the crucifix or the wafer as idolatry and apostasy, while the Catholic still believes that he worships Christ under those symbols.

ii. 6–13. *Israel's perplexities as Lo-ruhamah, the unpitied.*

6. Yahweh will win his erring one by suffering. The fruits of the field, and the wealth, which were ascribed to Baal and used for him, shall be taken away. Then in suffering the people will realize that these were Yahweh's gifts, His love tokens. 'Thy way' should be 'her ways.'

In suffering the thought turns Godwards, and the resolution forms, 'I will arise and go to my Father.'

Nowack again points out how verses 6, 7 seem to break the thread, 8 follows most naturally on 5. He calls the two verses an interpolation.

8. they used for Baal: i. e. for making an image of Baal, Isa. xliv. 17, but 2 Chron. xxiv. 7 suggests a wider application.

11. When the harvests fail the Baal-offerings cease. The festivals which have been mingled with the corrupt vestiges of the older cultus are no longer to be celebrated. 'New moon and sabbath': cf. Amos viii. 5. The sabbath, however, was celebrated

12 baths, and all her solemn assemblies. And I will lay
waste her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said,
These are my hire that my lovers have given me: and
I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field
13 shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of the
Baalim, unto which she burned incense; when she decked
herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after
14 her lovers, and forgat me, saith the LORD. Therefore,
behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilder-
15 ness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give
her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor

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even in the Exile. The joy of the harvest festival: cf. 1 Kings viii. 2, xii. 32; Judges xxi. 19.

12. The language here seems to point, not merely to the failure of crops, but to the Exile (Wellhausen).

13. For the dressing at festivals see Exod. iii. 18-22. The special dress was sacred to the Divinity, and laid aside when the festival was over: Ezek. xliv. 19.

earrings: Gen. xxxv. 4, or 'nose-rings,' Gen. xxiv. 47; Isa. iii. 21.

Their worship, under the name of Yahweh, had become the denial of Him, the whole cultus was at heart heathen.

ii. 14-23. *The threats melt into the tenderest promises.*

ii. 14-18. *Israel's exile and discipline in the wilderness.* Nowack regards the whole passage, except verse 17, as an interpolation. The sudden change from threat to wooing is too illogical. But perhaps it is Divine. And indeed Hosea is what he is, the type of the Saviour in thought as in name, because threat and wooing are thus intermingled. As Prof. G. A. Smith beautifully says, 'Other prophets, even Isaiah and Jeremiah, explored the kingdom of God; Hosea took it by storm.'

14. To recover His erring people Yahweh will bring them into the wilderness again where He first espoused them. 'The wilderness, the giving of vineyards, valley of Achor, &c., are, as it were, the wedding-ring restored' (Prof. G. A. Smith). Ezekiel borrowed the image (xx. 35) when the meaning of the wilderness was unveiled as the Exile in Babylon.

speak comfortably: the literal rendering is much more beautiful, 'speak to her heart': cf. Isa. xl. 2.

15. In the wilderness shall be a Vine (a root out of a dry ground): cf. Isa. xxxii. 15. The Valley of Achor (*or*, Trouble),

for a door of hope: and she shall make answer there,
as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she
came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at 16
that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi;
and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away 17
the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they
shall no more be mentioned by their name. And in 18
that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts
of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the
creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow
and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will
make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee 19

Isa. lxv. 10; Joshua vii. 24, was the valley through which Israel approached the promised land, the valley in which Achan was punished and the sin put away. Again the anguish of exile and failure is to be the door of hope.

make answer: i. e. respond to the love of Yahweh, cf. verse 21.

the day when she came up out of . . . Egypt. The devotion and purity of the Exodus are idealized in memory.

16. Ishi . . . Baali. In the Phoenician religion Baal, i. e. Lord, was the Lord of the land. He held it as a man held a woman whom he had bought and used. Israel had lowered her relation with God to this base connexion. Yahweh was merely her Baal. He will be to her in her regeneration Husband. So in the N. T. fulfilment of this Christ is a bridegroom (John iii. 29) and the Church is the Bride (Rev. xxi. 9). At this point Hosea foreshadows the great mystery of Eph. v. 32.

17. Nowack allows the originality of this verse, following on verse 13. Wellhausen considers it incompatible with verse 16, and decides that one or other must go.

names of the Baalim: e. g. Baal-berith, Baal-zebub, Baal-meon, Baal-zephon. The names Meribbaal, Jerubbaal, Ethbaal, show how in Israel Baal was identified with Yahweh, and accepted in the domestic piety of the people.

18. a covenant . . . with the beasts. A strong poetical figure: the reversal of the threat in verse 12. This fine image appears in the great prophecy of Isaiah and in Job v. 23.

ii. 19–23. *Israel's repentance and new espousals.*

19. I will betroth. The threefold repetition of the word *betroth* is, thinks Pusey, a mysterious allusion to the all-holy

unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in lovingkindness,
20 and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in
21 faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer
22 the earth; and the earth shall answer the corn, and the
23 wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will

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Trinity. 'To them is the Church betrothed, by the pronouncing of whose names each of her members is, in holy baptism, espoused as a chaste virgin unto Christ.'

A wife was always bought with a price; the price Yahweh pays for His restored wife is 'righteousness, justice, leal love, tender mercies, faithfulness.' The bride's wedding-gift is 'the knowledge of God' which she had lost, verse 13, iv. 1. For the money paid for the bride and the gift given to her see Gen. xxiv. 53, xxxiv. 12. Observe how the language here is prepared for that doctrine of God's righteousness imparted to a sinner which Paul makes the pivot of his gospel.

21. The fruitfulness of the land is the sign or mirror of Yahweh's restored grace. This is represented as a chorus of responsive voices. All proceeds from God; to Him the heavens respond in rain and sunshine; to them the earth replies in productiveness; to it answer the corn and wine and oil.

22. they shall answer Jezreel. To this God-sent fruitfulness answers the grateful heart of—Israel? No, Jezreel is used instead of the expected name, to show how the threat of i. 5 is reversed. That name of cursing has become a name of blessing which signifies 'Yahweh shall sow.'

23. I will sow: for 'her' read 'him,' viz. Jezreel. This certainly suggests a return from exile. But when Nowack regards the whole passage as the interpolation of Messianic hopes by a later hand, with a view of relieving the severity of Hosea's threats, he simplifies the book, it is true, but he robs us of the prophet who mingles sunshine with storm, and hopes with despair. He secures simplicity at the cost of depth.

her that had not obtained mercy. The name of Hosea's first child Jezreel remains unaltered in form, but is reversed in meaning. The names of the two others, the children of whoredoms (Prof. G. A. Smith), are changed from Lo-ruhamah and

say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

And the LORD said unto me, Go yet, love a woman 3
beloved of *her* friend and an adulteress, even as the
LORD loveth the children of Israel, though they turn
unto other gods, and love cakes of raisins. So I bought 2
her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and an homer of
barley, and an half homer of barley: and I said unto 3
her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not

Lo-ammi to Ruhamah and Ammi. The guilty nation whom Yahweh did not pity, but cast off from being His people, is flooded with His redemptive mercy, and restored like an erring wife. For the idea of restoration cf. Ezek. xi. 20; Zech. xiii. 9.

From this, which is the interpretation of the domestic experience of Hosea, the prophet now returns to the domestic experience itself, in its hard and ugly realism.

iii. 1. Gomer had left her husband, her friend, and become the mistress of another man. Hosea, acting out a symbol which God suggested, but moved by love for his wife, buys her back, and keeps her, though without conjugal rights, with promise of future restoration. This is an allegory. Yahweh will in the Exile deprive Israel of the forms of its religion, but will even thereby win Israel to Himself, and at last Israel shall return and seek the Lord and His Messiah.

love cakes of raisins: 2 Sam. vi. 19. The people believed that the Baalim gave the vintage, and they offered the raisins to them in pagan worship.

Pusey sees a mystical meaning in the dried raisins, compared with the richness of the true vine.

2. I bought her to me. At a later period it was unlawful to take back an adulterous wife: Jer. iii. 1 f. The price he paid for her, fifteen shekels, is the half of the price of a slave (Exod. xxi. 32); the barley, forty-five bushels (Pusey), represents a scanty sustenance for a year. The word 'lethech' is not elsewhere found, and it is only tradition which fixes it as a half-homer. From ■ Kings vii. 1, 16, 18 we might infer that fifteen ephahs were valued at fifteen shekels. In that case the homer and a half of barley (fifteen ephahs), added to the fifteen shekels, would be the price of a slave.

3. The words are obscure, but the sense is clear. Gomer is not to be a wife to any man, not even to her husband; and he on his part will abstain from close relations with her.

play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so
4 will I also be toward thee. For the children of Israel
shall abide many days without king, and without prince,
and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without
5 ephod or teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel
return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their

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4. shall abide many days: this foreshadows not only the Exile, but the long subsequent career of Israel up to the time of Christ and even since.

pillar: i. e. Mazzebah, a familiar object in the primitive cultus of Israel. The stone was presumably a habitation for the Divinity, that he might be present at the sacrifice. Though the Canaanite Mazzeboth were ruthlessly destroyed (Exod. xxxiv. 13, xxiii. 24; also Deut. xii. 3, vii. 5), and their presence was regarded as idolatrous (2 Kings xvii. 10: cf. also 1 Kings xiv. 23, xvi. 32; 2 Kings iii. 2, x. 26, xiv. 23, xviii. 4, xxiii. 14), it is strange to find a late prophet foretelling the erection of a Mazzebah to Yahweh in Egypt, Isa. xix. 19: cf. Isa. lvii. 6. In the Deuteronomic legislation it was forbidden (Deut. xvi. 22; Lev. xxvi. 1: cf. Mic. v. 11–13). In the recent excavations of Gezer one of the most interesting discoveries has been that of a Mazzebah on the clearly-marked site of a local sanctuary.

ephod in the old worship was used for taking the oracles of Yahweh: 1 Sam. xxiii. 6, 9, xxx. 7. Probably it was a stole containing a pouch in which were the stones of divination. Gideon's ephod in Judges xvii was clearly an idol.

teraphim: images of ancestors, used for divining, Zech. x. 2; Ezek. xxi. 21. This remnant of Aramaean idolatry lingered without severe reprobation to the eighth century B.C. (Gen. xxxi. 19; 1 Sam. xix. 13–16). It cannot be said that Hosea sanctions the use of the pillar, the ephod, and the teraphim. He only recognizes them as constant elements in the national cultus, and declares, perhaps with a touch of scorn (Wellhausen), that all these religious privileges (!) will fail in the Exile. 'From such rude forms of ascertaining the Divine will,' says G. A. Smith, 'prophecy in its new order was absolutely free.' But it must be owned that these rude forms are classed with king and prince and sacrifice. The spiritual value of the discipline of the Exile was that religion was to be disentangled from all these questionable externals.

Nowack considers the words 'without king and without prince' an obviously later interpolation; he treats verse 5 in the same way.

5. Wellhausen admits the verse in his text, but strikes out 'and David their king' as a Judaistic interpolation.

David their king. David was dead, but the king like David

king; and shall come with fear unto the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for 4
the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing 2

was to come. The Targum of Jonathan says, 'This is the king Messiah; whether he be from among the living, his name is David; or whether he be from the dead, his name is David.' It is one of the passages which the *Bath col*, or voice from heaven, revealed to the fathers.

In Ezekiel use is made of this prophecy, xxxiv. 23, xxxvii. 24.

in the latter days. The mediaeval Rabbi Kimchi on Isa. ii. 2 says: 'Whenever it is said *in the latter days*, it is meant in the days of the Messiah.'

It has been observed how much the passage i. 10—ii. 1 would gain in force if it were inserted here.

The Second Division of the Book. iv—xiv.

iv. *Israel's apostasy and unfaithfulness.*

Acknowledging the difficulty of arranging in any clear order these mingled cries, denunciations, pleadings, and promises evoked by the spectacle of a people in decay, Prof. G. A. Smith suggests a general division, thus :—

iv—vii. 7. *A people in decay morally.*

vii. 8—x. ,, *politically.*

Chapter iv is God's general charge against the people. We are to suppose that the strong king Jeroboam is dead; and the anarchy which followed has begun with the days of Menahem.

1. Yahweh is the accuser (Mic. vi. 2; Jer. ii. 9). The root-sin is that there is no knowledge of God. Ritual forgets how much of religion lies in the understanding. When the cultus is ritualistic, and the intelligence no longer is demanded in worship, truth disappears, and with truth what Prof. G. A. Smith calls 'leal love' (mercy).

knowledge of God: not Yahweh, for as Wellhausen says, this principle is not confined to Israel, but applies to mankind. Yahweh, the God of Israel, claims to be known on the general ground that the knowledge of God is the underlying necessity of all religions. Where God is so little known as to be confused with the mere powers of Nature, the moral disappears with the spiritual (ii. 20, iv. 6, v. 4, vi. 3; Jer. xxii. 16; Isa. xi. 9).

2. A more literal rendering would be more impressive. These

and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth
3 blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the
4 sea also shall be taken away. Yet let no man strive, neither let any man reprove; for thy people are as they
5 that strive with the priest. And thou shalt stumble in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee in
6 the night; and I will destroy thy mother. My people

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are verbal nouns, and it is an exclamation of horror: 'Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery.'

they break out: i. e. the people, like a river breaking its banks.

blood: it is the plural, which is used for murder. There is one continuous tale of bloody deeds covering the land.

3. Nature sighs under the sins of men (Wellhausen). It should be present, not future. There is drought and famine on every hand. If **sea** is to be taken literally, and not to cover the lakes and rivers, we may remember with Pusey that the fish shoals sometimes fail along certain coasts, and the discerning eye will see the punishment of God in these natural calamities.

4. The sense of this verse is easier to conjecture than the words to translate. Possibly a correction of the text is necessary. The sense is: 'Yet let no man strive with or blame the people; for the people only follow their priests, who have turned religion into ritual, and have neglected the instruction in the knowledge of God which was their true function.'

Dr. Pusey's ingenuity in getting from this severe judgement of priests the doctrine that to strive with the priests is the worst contumacy is justified by the text, but is refuted by the whole trend of the passage, especially by verse 9. The change in the text, suggested by the LXX, and adopted by Wellhausen, Nowack, and Prof. G. A. Smith, yields good sense: 'Thy people is like their priestlings' (*Chemarim*, the Hebrew word used in x. 5, viz. the priests of the Baal-worship, 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4). Then the word **priest** in the text may be carried over, as the vocative, to

5. 'O priest, thou shalt stumble.' And in the sin of the priest the prophet too is involved. The priesthood is a strong hierarchy; the prophets are less organized and less recognized; both these spiritual rulers, one by day and the other by night, stagger down into ruin.

thy mother: viz. the whole nation (Prof. G. A. Smith), the

are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast
rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt
be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law
of thy God, I also will forget thy children. As they were 7
multiplied, so they sinned against me: I will change
their glory into shame. They feed on the sin of my 8
people, and set their heart on their iniquity. And it 9
shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them
for their ways, and will reward them their doings. And 10
they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit
whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have
left off to take heed to the LORD. Whoredom and wine 11

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priesthood itself (Robertson Smith). Nowack changes the reading, and so gets the easy 'thy sons.'

6. Hosea does not charge these priests of the Northern Kingdom with being schismatic, as Pusey does, but with being bad priests, and not teaching the Torah (law). Their function was to be the guide and example of the flock in goodness; they had become the leaders in iniquity.

thy children: i. e. the priesthood will now cease in Israel, the priest's children shall be no longer priests. The priesthood, it must be remembered, was hereditary.

8. A multiplied priesthood generally means an apostasy from God. The payments for sin, and the fees for service, wrung from the sin of the people, make the priest's office lucrative, and men crowd into it for mercenary motives.

set their heart on their iniquity: i. e. rejoice in the sins of the people, the atonement for which in offerings and gifts is so profitable to the priest (2 Kings xii. 18). Langland in England, and the reformers in Germany, made the same complaint of their priests. God's judgement of priests is perennial.

9. shall be: rather 'is.'

10. All the feasts made out of the offerings of the people will leave them unsatisfied.

whoredom: the shameful practice in the Canaanitish religion, which arose from worshipping as God the reproductive power in Nature. But in this perversion of the religious sense the reproductive faculty ceases to produce. Contrast the promise given to Ephraim in Joseph: Gen. xlix. 25.

11. Here, on the recognized principle 'like priest, like people,'

12 and new wine take away the understanding. My people
ask counsel at their stock, and their staff declareth unto
them: for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to
err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.
13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn
incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and
terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: there-
fore your daughters commit whoredom, and your brides
14 commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when
they commit whoredom, nor your brides when they com-
mit adultery; for they themselves go apart with whores,
and they sacrifice with the harlots: and the people that
15 doth not understand shall be overthrown. Though thou,

Hosea turns from the iniquities of the priest to the similar sins of the people.

understanding: in the Heb. 'heart,' or as we should put it now, 'the brains' (Job viii. 10, ix. 4, xii. 3, 24; Prov. vi. 32).

12. stock: i. e. the senseless wood of which the idol is made (Jer. ii. 27; Hab. ii. 19).

staff: the various forms of taking oracles by means of sticks are comprised under the name of rhabdomancy. Fortune-telling, crystal-gazing, astrology, table-turning, anything in a corrupt age will be preferred to spiritual communion with God, in which the soul takes counsel at the only oracle which cannot fail.

the spirit of whoredom. The literal and figurative meanings intertwine. The whole idolatrous worship is regarded as an adulterous departure from God; but in the idolatrous worship actual acts of fornication played no inconsiderable part.

under their God. The wife is under her true lord, but the people have left Yahweh as Gomer had left Hosea.

13. The sacrifice on the 'high places' is not in itself denounced; but the licentious practices borrowed from Baal-worship, and the Kedeshoth or consecrated harlots (verse 15, see Deut. xxiii. 17) connected with the shrines under the trees, and on the promontories, where the flight of birds and other omens were observed. The punishment is that the immorality cannot be confined to the temple women; the men cannot sin in that licentious worship and keep their daughters and brides pure.

14, 15. the people that doth not understand . . . let not Judah offend is a later interpolation (Nowack). Others treat the whole of verse 15, and that only, as the interpolation.

Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and
come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven,
nor swear, As the LORD liveth. For Israel hath behaved 16
himself stubbornly, like a stubborn heifer: now will the
LORD feed them as a lamb in a large place. Ephraim is 17
joined to idols; let him alone. Their drink is become 18

It must be owned this extrusion of the reference to Judah by modern commentators is quite arbitrary. In this place, for instance, it seems quite natural that the prophet should glance at the Southern Kingdom and warn it against the evils which were bringing the Northern Kingdom to judgement.

15. Gilgal and Beth-el were the centres of worship in Northern Israel, established by the first Jeroboam to draw the people from Jerusalem, cf. Amos v. 5. But Beth-el, the 'house of God,' is contemptuously called Beth-aven, 'house of vanity.'

nor swear. Nowack suggests that 'in Beer-sheba' has dropped out. It was coupled with Beth-el and Gilgal (modern Beitin and Gilgilije), Amos v. 5, and thus the prohibition against swearing would be limited to swearing **As the LORD liveth,** in the manner of Beer-sheba ('the well of the oath').

iv. 16–19. These verses are scraps. Wellhausen omits them from the text, because they cannot be connected with what has gone before, nor with what follows, nor with one another. We can only do our best to gather the meaning of each clause by itself.

16. This verse makes sense if we read the second clause as a question, implying a denial, thus: 'Like an obstinate cow is Israel obstinate (cf. Deut. xxi. 18): now will Yahweh feed them like a lamb in a broad place' (viz. as the good shepherd leads his flock in Ps. xxiii). The image is of a stupid animal refusing its food or the yoke. Pusey cannot be right in seeing an allusion to the calves of the corrupt worship: this only introduces confusion.

17. Ephraim, as the most important tribe in the Northern Kingdom, stands, as frequently, the part for the whole. Within the borders of Ephraim was Beth-el, which had become Beth-aven.

joined to idols: viz. the images of Yahweh which had crept into the worship. (The Heb. root means carvings, and also sorrow, Prof. Paterson.) The sin of idolatry is not that the idols are images of false gods, but that they are images at all. To be joined with these material symbols is to be cut off from God who is Spirit.

let him alone: for idolatry there is no cure but the vengeance of the outraged Spirit.

18. Nowack gives up the first clause as untranslatable, and

sour: they commit whoredom continually; her rulers
19 dearly love shame. The wind hath wrapped her up
in its wings; and they shall be ashamed because of
their sacrifices.

5 Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, ye house of
Israel, and give ear, O house of the king, for unto you
pertaineth the judgement; for ye have been a snare at

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inclines to Houtsma's simple conjecture, that in the Heb. *Śar* should be *Śod*. This would give 'A company of tipplers: they commit whoredom continually.' The last clause is equally difficult. The feminine **her**—the nation typified as a woman—shows that the verse is out of all connexion with verse 17; 'Her shields (i. e. rulers) have passionately loved shame' is the only rendering possible apart from conjectural changes of text.

19. The text of the Heb. is here also in confusion. The rendering of the R. V. is as good as can be obtained. The wind is the Assyrian conqueror. Pusey happily quotes Shakespeare, 'to be imprisoned in the viewless wind.' Their rejected sacrifices, like Cain's, will cover them with confusion.

v. 1–14 is like a parallel to ch. iv. The charge is now restricted to the priests and princes, and the political strictures which begin properly in vii. 8 are anticipated.

1. the king: probably the unhappy Zechariah, a weak, pliant, self-indulgent, drunken scoffer, who after eleven years of anarchy succeeded his father, only to be murdered (Pusey): 2 Kings xv. 8.

the judgement. There is a deep irony in the double meaning of the word. It belonged to them to judge; the sentence of God is that they shall be judged.

for ye have been: the *chi* translated 'for' is the Greek *hoti*, introducing the direct narrative (Wellhausen). It should not therefore be translated in English. What follows is the substance of what the priests and kings are to hear.

Mizpah: in Gilead (Judges x. 17, xi. 11, 29; Joshua xiii. 26), modern Es-Salt, the scene of Jacob's covenant with Laban. **Tabor,** the Mount of Transfiguration, on the borders of Issachar and Zebulon. Jerome mentions the snaring of birds on the mountain in his day. Here Barak delivered Israel (Judges iv). These two sacred places had become the scenes of the corrupted worship. The Jewish traditions (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi) say that here pilgrims to Jerusalem were waylaid and murdered. It is only tradition, but as allegory it interprets the passage.

Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. And the revolters 2
are gone deep in making slaughter; but I am a rebuker
of them all. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from 3
me: for now, O Ephraim, thou hast committed whore-
dom, Israel is defiled. Their doings will not suffer them 4
to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredom is
within them, and they know not the LORD. And the 5
pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore Israel
and Ephraim shall stumble in their iniquity; Judah also

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2. the revolters are gone deep. These difficult words are by a very slight change in the Hebrew letters turned into a clause parallel to the two preceding: 'A pit they have made deep, upon Shittim.' (So Wellhausen, followed by Nowack and Prof. G. A. Smith.) For the pit cf. Ps. xciv. 13; Ezek. xix. 4, 8. Shittim (Num. xxv. 1; Joshua ii. 1, iii. 1), in Moab, where Israel went after Baal-peor. It probably, like Mizpah and Tabor, had become the scene of the modern Baal-worship.

3. These multiplied places of worship, profitable to the priests, were traps to the people, betraying them into idolatry and immorality.

4. The necessity for punishment lies in this, that idolatry, the worship of God under sensible forms, and immorality covered with the garb of religion, are deeds which will not let men return to God. On this Rom. i is an exact commentary.

5. Cf. vii. 10. **the pride of Israel,** the same expression as in Amos vi. 8, 'excellency of Jacob.' Keil, Hitzig, and others, strangely take this to be a periphrasis for Yahweh (Amos viii. 7), which of course gives a simple, though commonplace, meaning to the verb. But the literal meaning is much more profound. Their pride, which prevents them from seeing and confessing their sin, is the real witness against them, not only in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of men (Job xvi. 8). 'In the presence of God there needeth no other witness against the sinner than his own conscience' (Pusey).

Greek tragedy labours with the idea that pride is the sin which ensures the judgement of the gods. A fact so obvious to the ethnic conscience could not be less clear to Israel. 'The pomp of heraldry, the boast of power,' the glorying in resources, money, guns, ships and men, extent and richness of territory, imperial expansion, the arrogant sense of superiority to other nations and other men, which all come under the meaning of such a phrase as 'the pride of Israel,' are to seeing eyes and hearing ears the

6 shall stumble with them. They shall go with their flocks
and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall
not find him: he hath withdrawn himself from them.
7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD; for
they have borne strange children: now shall the new
moon devour them with their fields.
8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in
Ramah: sound an alarm at Beth-aven; behind thee,
9 O Benjamin. Ephraim shall become a desolation in the
day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made

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witness against the deluded men puffed up with vanity and doomed to humiliation.

At the same time the LXX reading of the Hebrew verb gives an easier sense than this remote and figurative meaning: 'the pride of Israel shall be humbled to his face.'

6. This shows that the offerings were brought in intention to Yahweh. But the worship under Baal-forms of idolatry and pollution evoked no response.

7. they have borne strange children: a passing reminder of the great allegory in chs. i–iii. A generation has grown up in the superstitious and debasing ritual, and they are no longer Yahweh's children.

now shall the new moon: rather, 'a month,' i. e. any month may bring the swift invader who will cover the fields. And the following verses (8 and 9) present the sudden approach of the Assyrian, the alarm of invasion, and the desolation which follows in its wake.

8. Prof. G. A. Smith gives a spirited rendering:

'Blow the trumpet in Gibeah, the clarion in Ramah;
Raise the slogan, Beth-aven; "After thee, Benjamin."'

The last phrase is the war-cry of the clan of Benjamin (Judges v. 14). A Scotchman can enter into this scene of the rousing of the clans to resist invasion.

9. But the gathering of the clans would be in vain; when the storm of the Assyrian had swept by, it would leave Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom, desolate for ever.

As the invaders were from the North, these towns of Benjamin, Gibeah (1 Sam. xiii. 2, 15, xiv. 16; 2 Sam. xxiii. 29) and Ramah (Judges iv. 5, xix. 13; 1 Kings xv. 17, 22; Isa. x. 29) and Beth-el, here contemptuously called Beth-aven (vide iv. 15), sounding the alarm, indicate that the enemy have penetrated to the southern border of the land.

known that which shall surely be. The princes of Judah 10
are like them that remove the landmark: I will pour
out my wrath upon them like water. Ephraim is op- 11
pressed, he is crushed in judgement; because he was
content to walk after the command. Therefore am I 12
unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as
rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah 13
saw his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent
to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither

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10. The discourse passes from the priests to the kings, both of Israel and Judah.

that remove the landmark. This land-grabbing of the nobles in the Southern Kingdom, which overturned the original settlement of land (Deut. xix. 14), is denounced by the prophets of Judah (Isa. v. 8; Mic. ii. 2).

In times of national disturbance unscrupulous men increase their possessions; they grow rich on the ruin of their country.

11. The verse as it stands is difficult. Nowack freely alters the Massoretic text with the help of the LXX, and Prof. G. A. Smith changes 'command' into 'vanity' (LXX, Syr., Chald.). Pusey ingeniously assumes that the 'commandment' is that of Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 28, 32, 33).

If, however, we are to force our way to a meaning through the existing text, we must read the second clause as a question, implying a negative answer, and take verse 12, as the explanation of the first clause of verse 11, thus: 'Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgement (*sc.* by Yahweh who is as a moth to him), for was he content to walk after the commandment?'

12. Therefore is not in the text. It should be 'for I am a moth,' i. e. the explanation of Ephraim's crushed condition is that Yahweh Himself has for Ephraim's disobedience become the destroying power in the nation. The moth eats a garment slowly; rottenness, i. e. dry rot or caries in wood, is even a slower process. The judgement in Judah would follow that of Israel after a short interval. Already Uzziah was dead, and the politicians whom Isaiah satirized were guiding Judah to the inevitable doom.

13. The judicial blindness which made Menahem send tribute to Assyria in 738, and so give the Assyrian, who was to destroy the land, a foothold for interference, could only be explained by the awful fact that Yahweh Himself was working the destruction of the people; 'Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.'

Jareb (x. 6), a nickname for the Assyrian king, meaning 'he

14 shall he cure you of your wound. For I will be unto
Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house
of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry
15 off, and there shall be none to deliver. I will go and
return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence,
and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me
earnestly.

6 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath
torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will

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will contend.' Prof. G. A. Smith translates happily: 'King Pick-quarrel.'

It is hardly worth while, with Wellhausen, to introduce a new difficulty by supplying **Judah** before **sent to king Jareb** in order to complete the parallelism of the verse. The word for **cure** is Aramaic, and points to the dialect of the Northern Kingdom.

14 repeats the reason why Assyria cannot help Israel. Yahweh Himself is the destroyer. The Lord as a lion, xiii. 7. **I will carry off,** *sc.* the prey.

v. 15—vii. 2. In this awful passage Yahweh declares that even the repentance of the people will not avail; it is too shallow, and it is too late.

15. Here is the picture of God withdrawing from His people and leaving them to themselves, putting into their mouths the words of penitence, and saying that He will not accept them.

For Yahweh's **place** cf. Isa. xviii. 4. **acknowledge their offence:** rather, 'feel their guilt.' The next words are better rendered, 'When trouble comes to them they will soon enough seek Me,' and then follows the language of facile repentance and prayer, which, like the general confession lightly uttered in an unthinking congregation, weighs less than nothing.

vi. 1–3. It is a pain to treat these beautiful words of contrition and repentance as a prayer which is uttered in vain and rejected. But it is impossible in any other way to fit them in with what follows, verses 4–11. We are compelled therefore to read the salutary lesson that the confident prayers of penitence and promises of amendment, wrung from our lips in times of trouble, may easily be rejected by God, and rank among 'presumptuous sins.' With this stern teaching of the prophet a new notion of repentance breaks in upon the mind, 'heart-sorrow with a clear life ensuing,' not lip-confession, without the sense of sin or the serious purpose of amendment.

bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the 2
third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before
him. And let us know, let us follow on to know the 3
LORD; his going forth is sure as the morning: and he
shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that
watereth the earth.

We surrender the beautiful prayer of penitence too lightly used, in order to recover it in the anguish of a genuine sorrow for sin, and the faith of a sure forgiveness at the Cross of Christ.

1. The words are the genuine language of penitence, but alas! they do not represent the true conditions of pardon. That He will heal and bind up is a false hope, too lightly formed. The people are 'returning' unto the Lord, but He on His part has 'returned to His place' (v. 15).

2. 'Two or three days': a common expression of a short time; so in Demosthenes, *De Cor.* xxxv.

Pusey thinks with the Fathers that the verse refers to Christ's resurrection on the third day, and our resurrection in Him. But this Rabbinical and Patristic interpretation of Scripture teaches us what may be read into it, not what may be got out of it. It is only a mystical, as distinct from a historical, interpretation that can find any allusion here to the Resurrection. Is this the 'Scripture' in the mind of our Lord and of his disciples when they thought of his resurrection in three days? (John ii. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 4: cf. Luke xxiv. 46).

Mr. Bartlet says: 'Hosea vi. 2 does not suggest the experience of Messiah himself; yet the idea of solidarity between Messiah and the Messianic people would naturally suggest such a use of the passage in the light of known facts as to Jesus's resurrection' (*Expos. Times*, xiv. p. 120). The Master of St. John's, Cambridge, in *Expos. Times*, xiv. p. 213, shows how this use made of the passage in the N. T. may be justified rabbinically. With another pointing of the same Hebrew letters, it might read, 'He shall raise him up, and he shall be made alive.'

3. let us know. Their standing fault was that they had not the knowledge of God (iv. 1). This repentance verbally, at least, expresses the right purpose. **follow on:** the very words used in ii. 7 for the pursuit of the Baalim.

his going forth is sure as the morning is an appropriate idea. But it is tempting to accept the LXX version, justified by a slight alteration of the text (Giesebrecht), which yields 'As soon as we seek Him we shall find Him.' This exactly expresses the easy, misplaced confidence of men who have not realized the enormity of their guilt.

the rain: i. e. the winter rain (Ezek. x. 13); **the latter rain,**

4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah,
what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a
morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away.
5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have
slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judge-
6 ments are *as* the light that goeth forth. For I desire
mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God
7 more than burnt offerings. But they like Adam have

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the spring rain (Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24). The two rains, the beginning and the end, of the season were essential to a harvest. A beautiful comparison for Him who is the beginning and the end.

4. The reply of Yahweh to this pious and futile prayer takes up another familiar feature of the climate of Palestine. 'Am I like the constant dawn, and the rain on which harvest depends? Your goodness is like the light cloud which is dispersed when the hot sun rises, and like the dew distilled in the night, but gone at once in the morning.' In Palestine the sky is usually clear of cloud by nine o'clock.

5. Wellhausen and Nowack place a gap between verses 4 and 5. The connexion could only be established by a forced train of thought. The repentance is too shallow; their goodness is transitory; therefore, instead of the pardon they expect, the hewing of the prophet, the indignant words of God, and judgements like lightning, will be the answer of the prayer. If, however, we may treat verse 5 as a distinct utterance, we may refer the description to the work of previous prophets—Samuel, Elijah, Elisha (then cf. for the hewing, 1 Sam. xv. 33; 1 Kings xviii. 40).

thy judgements are as **the light.** The Hebrew consonants in these words can be read, and with a far clearer meaning, 'my judgement goeth forth like light,' i.e. lightning.

6. I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. This mercy, 'leal love' (Prof. G. A. Smith), is just what in Israel is like a morning cloud: while the sacrifices, mere acts of the ritual, which God cared nothing about, were frequent and regular.

This great prophetic demand was Christ's favourite quotation from the O. T. Wellhausen points the contrast with 1 Sam. xv. 22, where obedience and not love is demanded in place of sacrifice. Here we get exactly the contribution which Hosea, the evangelic prophet, made to religion. Mere obedience is warmed into love. Samuel certainly did not preach mercy to Saul.

7 again has no close connexion with verse 6. The words are hard to translate; for what can 'there' refer to when no place

transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, it is stained with blood. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem: yea, they have committed lewdness. In the house of Israel I have seen an horrible thing: there whoredom is *found* in Ephraim, Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, there is an harvest appointed for thee, when I bring again the captivity of my people.

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has been named? Wellhausen would change the Hebrew *ch* for the very similar Hebrew *b*, 'in Adam' for 'like Adam,' and take Adam as a place, perhaps Admah (Nowack). Prof. G. A. Smith treats the difficulty heroically: 'there—he will now point out the very spots—have they dealt treacherously against me.' The spots follow.

8. Gilead was not a city, but a country: it means 'Mizpah' (Wellhausen following Ewald, cf. Judges xii. 7), and is a variant for v. 1. Pusey's suggestion, that the land of Gilead, where the two and a half tribes dwelt, may be described spiritually as a city, just as the world consists of the city of God and the city of Satan, is imaginative and beautiful, but does not commend itself to modern commentators.

9. The words are plainer in the translation than in the original. Many emendations of the text are suggested, but the meaning is not doubtful: 'the holy Shechem, one of the cities of refuge, a priests' city, full of sacred memories (Joshua xx. 7, xxi. 21, xxiv. 1, 25; 1 Kings xii. 1, 25), is a robbers' den, the priests are the robbers, the offerings are their booty.' The murder and the lewdness may be spiritual or literal, perhaps both.

10. For **house of Israel**, which is an inappropriate expression here, a slight change would make 'Beth-el' (Wellhausen). 'In another nation idolatry was error; in Israel, which had the knowledge of the one true God, and had the law, it was horror,' said one of the Fathers quoted by Pusey.

11. If this verse is to stand, and not to be rejected as a Judaean gloss, the 'harvest' must be taken *malo sensu*, a harvest of penalty (Joel iv. 13; Jer. li. 33), but the second clause referring to the return from captivity becomes unintelligible. We are probably justified therefore, with Nowack and Prof. G. A. Smith, in treating it as a later insertion, and then with Pusey we may give to it a brighter meaning. Though Judah will for the time be involved

7 When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of
Ephraim discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria;
for they commit falsehood: and the thief entereth in,
2 and the troop of robbers spoileth without. And they
consider not in their hearts that I remember all their
wickedness: now have their own doings beset them
3 about; they are before my face. They make the king

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in the same fate of captivity as Israel, the day will come, far off though it be, when Judah will return, and reap a harvest of spiritual blessing. Keil endeavours to get the right sense by maintaining that 'turning the captivity' does not mean the return from exile, but the escape from sin, and this can only be accomplished by bringing on Judah the harvest of punishment.

vii. **1.** The hopelessness of the people and the futility of their shallow repentance appear from this, that when Yahweh would heal them the iniquity is only further discovered. Falsehood, stealing (cf. Joel ii. 9 for the expression 'entereth in'), and highway robbery prevail on every hand.

2. Cf. v. 4. They think that God is indifferent to the sin which has ceased to shock them. They are so immersed in their evil deeds that they quite forget how clear both they and their sins are to the All-seeing eye. It is a complete picture of the callousness, the presumption, the affected piety, which leave God no alternative but to inflict the searching and awakening pains of punishment.

vii. 3–7. *The Throne itself is guilty.* The passage is difficult to connect with what has gone before and with what follows; the text also seems to be corrupt, so that the exact rendering cannot be ascertained. Wellhausen heroically corrects the text, and gets the following: 'In their knavery they anoint kings, and in their falseness princes, they are all adulterers. On the day of our king the princes were sick with wine-fever. . . . Inwardly they are like an oven, their heart burns in them, the whole night their anger sleeps, in the morning it awakes in full blaze. Altogether they glow like an oven . . . and destroy their judges: all their kings are fallen, none among them calls to me.'

Nowack is a little less drastic, as he retains the whole of verse 4 in the text. We shall do well to get the clearest sense we can out of the R. V.

3. We suppose we are in the reign of Zechariah, a witness of his revels, and of his murder at the hands of Shallum (2 Kings xv. 8–12); the fourth generation of the house of Jehu brings the

glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their
lies. They are all adulterers; they are as an oven 4
heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir *the fire*, from the
kneading of the dough until it be leavened. On the 5
day of our king the princes made themselves sick with
the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with
scorners. For they have made ready their heart like an 6
oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the
night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.
They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; all 7

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dynasty to an end, and the succession of phantom kings begins with which the Northern Kingdom comes to an end.

They make the king glad: a change in the order of two letters gives Wellhausen's 'anoint,' but the text is sense, and full of awful teaching. Zechariah was one who not only did the iniquity, but had pleasure in those who did it, the last stage of degradation (Rom. i. 32).

4. all adulterers: i. e. habitual adulterers, pausing only in the intervals of sin to prepare for a new outbreak. Hence the image of the oven; the baker leaves the fire to smoulder while the kneaded dough is being leavened. So these men, debauched with whoredom and wine, kept their vile passions dormant only for fresh stirring and flaring up, when occasion offered. The image is fairly distinct, and is completed in verse 6, where 'their baker' is their own evil will or imagination, which after a temporary rest rouses the flame of thirst and lust and murder again.

5. the day of our king: Zechariah's coronation or birthday. Prof. G. A. Smith translates 'were sick with fever from wine.' Pusey points out how Englishmen still celebrate these occasions in the same way.

he stretched out his hand. This clause Nowack pronounces hopelessly corrupt. But the phrase 'stretch or draw out one's hand,' if not found elsewhere, is yet intelligible, describing the jeering movement of a drunken man. And **scorners** is well paralleled by Prov. xx. 1, where the same Hebrew word occurs, translated 'mocker.'

6. whiles they lie in wait: this introduces the new idea of the conspiracy. Shallum is in the background nursing his murderous plan until the morning. **made ready their heart** is unfortunately not a translation of the Hebrew word, which Nowack says defies interpretation, *lit.* 'have brought near.'

7. devour their judges: evidently written in the time of

their kings are fallen: there is none among them that
8 calleth unto me. Ephraim, he mixeth himself among
9 the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers

Menahem, the murderer of Shallum, the murderer of Zechariah (2 Kings xv. 14).

all their kings are fallen. The instability of the dynasty in the Northern Kingdom reminds one of the swift succession of the Roman Emperors after the first century. Omri was followed by a son and a grandson; Jehu had three successors in his family line. Otherwise no king did more than secure the throne to his own son. Nine kings were dethroned and murdered by their successors; eight only died natural deaths. It is curious that Hosea does not connect this disastrous record with the originally schismatic character of the Northern Kingdom and its worship: this, however, Pusey does not fail to do. Hosea rests his indictment entirely upon moral grounds. The chronicler, on the other hand, regarded the Northern Kingdom from the first as cut off from the chosen seed and the house of God.

vii. 8—x. *A People in Political Decay.* The reference to the iniquity and death on the throne leads to a series of oracles which denounce the political decay of the kingdom. The connexion between morals and politics, and the impossibility of political progress and stability without spiritual purity, are clearly shown.

8. mixeth himself. Nowack thinks the meaning cannot be extracted from this word, *lit.* 'he poureth himself over.' The word, used of mixing, e. g. the oil with the sacrificial flour, is in root the same as the supposed origin of Babel. Instead of standing aloof, as Judah did, and has done to this day, the Northern Kingdom, opening on the routes which connected great empires, got mixed with the dough of the world, and ultimately disappeared in it for ever. 'Come out and be ye separate' is the first condition of influencing the world. 'Go in and be ye mixed' is not to save the world, but to lose yourself. Ephraim escaped the reproach of Puritanism; it also perished irretrievably.

a cake not turned: a thin pancake, which, left on the heated stone of the oven, is burnt on one side and unbaked on the other. The image would cover, (1) the unequal distribution of wealth, the very rich and the very poor; (2) the separation between religious and secular, worship on Sunday, godlessness in the week; (3) the hot and cold of the frantic political relations with Assyria or Egypt; (4) the half-baked character, made up of extremes, and never harmonized.

9. Strangers. The commerce and the welcome intercourse

have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea,
gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth
it not. And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: 10
yet they have not returned unto the LORD their God,
nor sought him, for all this. And Ephraim is like a 11
silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt,
they go to Assyria. When they shall go, I will spread 12
my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls
of the heaven: I will chastise them, as their congregation
hath heard. Woe unto them! for they have wandered 13

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with the great powers like Assyria and Egypt have, unconsciously to itself, destroyed the character of the nation.

gray hairs. 'Thy gray hairs are thy passing bell,' says Pusey, referring to an Arabic proverb. The national decrepitude has stolen on unobserved.

10. the pride of Israel: cf. v. 5. Here, according to Prof. G. A. Smith, the pride testifying must mean, that though the pride of the people is humiliated by having to appeal to Assyria and Egypt, yet they do not think of returning to God. But we might keep the sense of v. 5. The extravagance and luxury of the country, in face of the desperate moral condition, were to any discerning eye the real condemnation of the people. Yet there was no repentance.

11. a silly dove: which flies hither and thither and never notices the snare. An Eastern proverb says: 'There is nothing more simple than a dove.' The Hebrew word for dove is Jonah, and would recall here the story of that prophet. In Matt. x. 16 the simplicity of a dove is commended; but that dove has fled for refuge and has found salvation and wisdom in Christ.

they call unto Egypt: see 2 Kings xv. 19, xvii. 4; also ch. v. 13, ix. 3, xii. 1. Now they appealed to Egypt for help against Assyria; now they sought to propitiate Assyria directly. The silliness lay in their never noticing that the net was cast over them in these idle negotiations, cast over them by their God, to whom they ought to have resorted.

12. my net: punishment, not mercy, though to the Christian ear to be caught in the net of God suggests mercy through punishment.

as their congregation hath heard. These words, according to Wellhausen and Nowack, are unintelligible. The LXX read a word which meant 'in hearing of their tribulation.' Our text as it stands, which might be rendered 'according to the report

from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet
14 they have spoken lies against me. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, they
15 rebel against me. Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against
16 me. They return, but not to *him that is* on high; they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Ĕgypt.

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brought to their congregation,' can only mean 'in the manner I have publicly proclaimed in Israel'—e. g. Lev. xxvi. 14; Deut. xxviii. 15.

13. lies against me. Hypocrites speak lies to God; unbelievers speak lies against Him. The former is worse; but even the latter is destruction.

14. assemble themselves. Reading two d's in the Hebrew word instead of two r's (ד for ר) as the LXX did, we get 'cut themselves.' This corresponds to the 'howl' in the first clause, and brings up the heathen scene of 1 Kings xviii. 28.

beds: the divans used in the heathen worship.

corn and wine. There is nothing of the 'heart' in their religion, only a mercenary and materialistic desire to get bread and wine: cf. ii. 9. When men worship God for what they can get, they neither get that nor God.

15. taught: exercised (Wellhausen).

16. The text is very corrupt. **to** him that **is on high**, cf. xi. 7. The Hebrew is three words for the ten in English (*jashubu lo al*, 'they turn not up'). Nowack here and in xi. 7 would correct *lo al* into *labbaal*, and so get 'they turn to Baal.' He thinks the idea of God being on high is later than the early prophets. But here Pusey's less critical faith seems more illuminative: 'They turn, not most High—the hearer readily filled up the broken sentence, which fell, drop by drop, from the prophet's choked heart.'

a deceitful bow: which you draw, but it does not spring back, and the arrow falls to the ground. 'God has, as it were,' says Cyril, 'bent Israel as His own bow against the tyranny of the devil and the deceits of idolatry . . ., but . . . they became as a warped bow shooting their arrows contrary.'

for the rage of their tongue. To the allusion we have no key (Prof. G. A. Smith). The word for 'rage' is that in Hab. iii. 12

Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle *he cometh* 8
against the house of the LORD: because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.
They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee. 2
Israel hath cast off that which is good: the enemy shall 3
pursue him. They have set up kings, but not by me; 4
they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that

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used of God's indignation (Ezek. xxii. 24). It may therefore be a righteous indignation, but in their predestined fall it will be futile. Among the great powers like Egypt their righteous fuming will be subject for derision. This is the last and worst of punishments; the world in which we trusted points at us the finger of scorn.

viii. **1.** Set **the trumpet:** cf. v. 8 and Amos iii. 6. For so incurable and unrepentant a people nothing remains but punishment, the invasion of a foreign host, conquest and exile. For **mouth,** *lit.* gums, see Prov. v. 3.

As an eagle. The eagle is Shalmaneser, who carried off the ten tribes, but also, thinks Pusey, points to Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, and even to the Roman eagle taking Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

2. shall cry: cf. v. 15, vi. 1.

we Israel know thee: just the plea which our Lord says He will reject, Matt. vii. 22. The words of religion will not be accepted for the deeds; though the deeds may be for the words.

viii. 4–14. Prof. G. A. Smith, with equal wit and wisdom, epitomizes the paragraph, 'Artificial kings and artificial gods.' It is the punishment of a nation destroyed by wine and whoredom that it has no men in the hour of its need, but only puppets, and no God, but only idols.

4. During 253 years Israel had eighteen kings from ten different families, and no family came to a close save by violent death. The rapid succession of usurpers in the closing years was only the final plunge of a disastrous career.

of their silver and their gold, &c.: ii. 8. Hosea was the first, and it was his great and original contribution to religion, to denounce the use of images, even images of Yahweh, in worship. Amos had not yet taken that ground, nor had Elijah.

that they (*sc.* the silver and gold) **may be cut off.** The result is spoken of as the purpose. Pusey compares such a phrase as 'he goes the way to ruin himself.'

they may be cut off. He hath cast off thy calf, O
Samaria; mine anger is kindled against them: how long
will it be ere they attain to innocency? For from Israel is
even this; the workman made it, and it is no God: yea,
the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. For they
sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: he
hath no standing corn; the blade shall yield no meal; if
so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up. Israel is
swallowed up: now are they among the nations as a

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5. He hath cast off. Wellhausen simplifies the verse by reading 'I' for 'he.'

thy calf, O Samaria. The expression is contemptuous and derisive. The stately bull-figures at Dan and Beth-el, employed to represent Yahweh, are described as Samaria's calf! Samaria, as the capital, stands for the kingdom.

innocency. Nowack quotes Jer. xxv. 29, Exod. xxi. 28, to show that the word may mean 'freedom from punishment.' But the striking phrase of the original 'how long will they not be capable (of) innocency?' is made much tamer by Nowack's suggestion, 'how long are they unable to escape punishment?' There is a stern and awful irony in the thought of innocency being removed beyond the reach of attainment.

6. from Israel is even this, viz. the idol. Instead of Israel being from God, the god is from Israel, the handicraft of man.

broken in pieces: Wellhausen, much more literally, 'into splinters goes the calf of Samaria.' But the Hebrew word is ἅπαξ λεγ. Jerome did not know what it meant, but had heard that it was used for spiders' webs. If the Talmudic interpretation 'splinters' is adopted, it shows that the images in Israel were made of wood and only overlaid with silver and gold.

7. the wind: i. e. vanity, x. 13. **the whirlwind** is worse than vanity, destruction.

no standing corn: better, 'stalk it hath none.' But what 'it' is cannot be seen. It is impossible to make the Hebrew as it stands grammatically smooth. But the idea, however terrible, is plain and striking. You sow wind, the vanity of injustice, vice, and irreligion. No stalk grows from such a sowing, nor any meal. The harvest is merely the whirlwind. Should there from all this vanity and corruption be a grain or two of good, that will be consumed by strangers in the approaching exile.

8. now. It is already accomplished in the prophet's eye.

vessel wherein is no pleasure. For they are gone up to 9
Assyria, *like* a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath
hired lovers. Yea, though they hire among the nations, 10
now will I gather them; and they begin to be minished
by reason of the burden of the king of princes. Because 11
Ephraim hath multiplied altars to sin, altars have been
unto him to sin. Though I write for him my law in ten 12

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a vessel wherein is no pleasure: 'a vessel there is no more use for' (Prof. G. A. Smith). Pusey compares 'a vessel unto dishonour,' 2 Tim. ii. 20, and quotes Orosius concerning Israel, 'like a vessel made for dishonourable offices, so they have been filled with revolting contumelies.' As the usurer and moneylender of the world, as the publican in Russia, as the speculator and financier of Western Europe, Israel is still regarded among the nations as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

9. a wild ass: in contrast with 'the ass which knoweth his master's crib.' This wild creature of the desert, on which the lion preys (Ecclus. xiii. 19), is the embodiment of mobility, pertinacity, stubbornness, and untameableness (Gen. xvi. 12; Job xxxix. 5).

hired lovers, or perhaps 'hath given love gifts,' viz. the presents sent to secure the aid of Assyria.

10. gather them: viz. into the confinement of the exile (viii. 13, ix. 3). For the hiring of the lovers cf. ii. 16, iii. 3. The second part of the verse defies elucidation, says Nowack. But the LXX read words which differ in two letters from our text, and translated 'they shall have to cease a little from the anointing of king and princes.' The throne will perish and the feverish succession of sovereigns will end in the stillness of servitude. In the R. V. as it stands the **king of princes** must be the Assyrian king.

11. The discourse turns to the other target, the artificial gods (Prof. G. A. Smith). The multiplication of altars, intended as an act of formal piety, is a deepening of the sin, when the cultus is corrupt and the spirit of righteousness has fled. It is remarkable how a paganized Christianity marks its own degradation by the multiplication of altars in its churches.

12. This shows that the Torah (Law) was written, and voluminous, in Hosea's time. But the Torah was not only the ceremonial Law, but the moral (cf. iv. 6). So Mic. vi. 6-8. The charge is that they keep the ceremonial part, e. g. the sacrificing (verse 13), and forget the moral part. This gives us no clue as to the date of the Pentateuch.

thousand *precepts*, they are counted as a strange thing.
13 As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh
and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not: now will
he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; they
14 shall return to Egypt. For Israel hath forgotten his
Maker, and builded palaces; and Judah hath multiplied
fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and
it shall devour the castles thereof.

9 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, like the peoples; for
thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved
2 hire upon every cornfloor. The threshing-floor and the

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a strange thing: rather, 'a stranger,' who in Israel could have no voice (cf. Gen. xix. 9).

13. offerings: a word coined in the Hebrew by Hosea (Pusey). It is to express the idea that the sacrifices were the people's gifts to God. They thought they were always giving; but God regarded it in another light.

return to Egypt: cf. ii. 16, ix. 3; to repeat the bondage, and to learn by sorrow. 'As the formation, so also the re-formation, of the theocracy requires a long sojourn in the house of bondage' (Wellhausen). Some of the two tribes did go into Egypt literally, cf. Jer. xlii. 43, but the language is figurative of any captivity and bondage.

14. Modern commentators regard this verse as a later addition, perhaps borrowed from Amos. The palaces, or idol temples, are not referred to by Hosea.

thereof is feminine, and there is nothing for it to refer to.

Pusey, on the other hand, accepts the verse, and refers to 2 Kings xviii. 13 for the fulfilment of the threat which came in the days of Hezekiah.

ix. 1–9. *The effects of Exile.*

1. A valuable source for characterizing the ancient cultus (Wellhausen). Threshing-floor and oil-press, corn and wine, were its motive, loud joy and shouting revel its expression. It was Dionysiac, as the Greeks would say, or as Hosea would say, heathenish. But the joy and the revelry were all to cease in the Exile. This discourse was perhaps pronounced at a harvest-festival.

hire upon every cornfloor: this is exactly parallel to ii. 6, &c. Not Yahweh, but Baalim, are the givers of the corn and wine and oil; and these are the hire of an adulterous woman. Hosea con-

winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her. They shall not dwell in the LORD's land; but 3
Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. They shall not pour out wine *offerings* 4
to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread shall be for their appetite; it shall not come into the house of the LORD. What will ye do in the day 5
of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of the

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trasts with the old pure Yahweh-worship, this coarse and material religion which has grown up in Canaan under the influence of **the peoples,** as he calls the old inhabitants of the land.

2. For this failure of the heathenish plenty, cf. Amos v. 11, Zeph. i. 13.

shall not feed. The Heb. does not justify this. The LXX read 'shall not know them,' and that is a better parallel with **shall fail.**

her. Israel is thought of as the adulteress.

3. All this old religion of Israel was bound up with the land, and must cease when the exiles left its borders. They could not, if they would, maintain their religion in Assyria (cf. Ezek. iv. 13). A new idea of religion was to grow out of this impossibility. There is a deep irony in the fact that the very powers whom the adulteress ogled (v. 13, vii. 11) should become the tyrannical possessors and destroyers.

4. The sacrifices were joyous feasts, accompanied by wine offerings (Exod. xxix. 38–41; Num. xxviii, xxix, also xv. 3–10).

neither shall they (viz. the sacrifices) **be pleasing unto him.** (Jer. vi. 20; Mal. iii. 4.) But as the sacrifices were to cease this sense is not appropriate. The change of one letter, *ch* for *b*, gives the appropriate sense, 'neither shall they prepare for him their sacrifice.' The word **sacrifices** is drawn into this clause from the following. A very slight change would give us: 'like the bread of sorrows shall their bread be.' For the bread at the funeral, see Jer. xvi. 7. To eat it was to be unclean for worship.

their bread shall be for their appetite. They had eaten the sacrifices for their appetite, forgetting Yahweh: now they would not be allowed to eat for anything else! There is an awful irony in this threat.

5. day of solemn assembly: sabbath, new moon, &c.; **the feast**

6 LORD? For, lo, they are gone away from destruction,
yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them:
their pleasant things of silver, nettles shall possess them:
7 thorns shall be in their tents. The days of visitation are
come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall
know it: the prophet is a fool, the man that hath the
spirit is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and
8 because the enmity is great. Ephraim *was* a watchman
with my God: as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in

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of the LORD: the harvest feast. 1 Kings viii. 2, xii. 32; Judges xxi. 19; Ezek. xlv. 25.

6. from destruction: i. e. their desolated homes in Palestine. Wellhausen, by a slight change, gets 'they are gone away to Assyria.'

Memphis: the capital of Lower Egypt, near Cairo, was even then the land of ancient pyramids and mausoleums. Hosea expected an actual exile to Egypt, which did not take place, see viii. 13.

things of silver: *sc.* the silver idols. The rank grasses, nettles, and thorns, will grow where Israel dwelt and bowed down to its images: cf. Isa. xxxiv. 13.

7. days of recompence: in Heb. 'days of Shillum,' perhaps hints at Shallum with whom the anarchy began (Wellhausen): 2 Kings xv. 10.

the prophet is a fool. Nowack thinks this is the rash charge of the people against the prophet, just as in all ages the man of God seems a fool to the godless: and even Christ seemed mad to his relatives. But this is to use Hosea's obscurity as a reason for making him mean just what we wish. It is far simpler to suppose that, in the gross corruption of the times, the prophet was a false prophet and the man of the spirit was possessed in a bad sense. Amos a little later repudiated the title of prophet because it had become thus debased. This was the worst penalty of iniquity and enmity against God, that even so-called prophets deceived.

8. The difficulty of this verse has encouraged commentators to make suggestions of all kinds. But their conclusions are not much more illuminating than the plain rendering of the words as they stand, 'Watchman Ephraim with my God.' Prof. G. A. Smith takes **watchman** as 'spy' in a bad sense. Ephraim does not watch for God, but jealously and churlishly seeks for ground of complaint against him. Pusey, on the other hand, refers the words to the true prophet like Hosea, 'The watchman of Ephraim is

all his ways, *and* enmity in the house of his God. They 9
have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of
Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity, he will visit
their sins. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; 10
I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her
first season: but they came to Baal-peor, and conse-
crated themselves unto the shameful thing, and became
abominable like that which they loved. As for Ephraim, 11

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with God,' i.e. a worker with Him (cf. 2 Cor. vi. 1). Either interpretation is full of difficulty. But Prof. Smith's rendering leads better to the next clause: 'the prophet (i.e. the false prophet of verse 7) is a fowler's snare on all his ways.' As Jerome says: 'On searching diligently ancient histories, I could not find that any divided the Church or seduced people from the house of Israel, except those who have been set by God as priests and prophets, i.e. watchmen.'

and **enmity**: i.e. hatred personified. The hatred condemned in the people, verse 7, is personified in the evil prophet, verse 8.

9. have deeply corrupted themselves. This is really more intelligible than Nowack's ingenious correction, to suit his own view of the verse as referring to the true prophet: 'they have made for him a deep grave.'

the days of Gibeah: cf. x. 9, Judges xix. 15, &c., for the horror of Gibeah. The tragedy of that shocking tale was that for the moment God seemed to forget, and Benjamin was victorious. But the visitation came nevertheless swift and sure.

ix. 10-17. *The corruption that is through lust.*

10. grapes in the wilderness: where from its unexpectedness the vine would be the more welcome: Deut. viii. 15.

the firstripe in the fig tree: the sweetness of which passed into a proverb: Isa. xxviii. 4; Mic. vii. 1; Jer. xxiv. 2.

The love of God to Israel in the desert made the transgression at Baal-peor the more horrible, Num. xxv. 3. That was the beginning of the shame which clung to the people in Canaan throughout, the worship of God by rites of impurity.

Baal-peor: i.e. the Baal of Peor, the Moabite god to whom Israel yoked himself while in Shittim; the name of the place was in full Beth-Baal-Peor; but in Deut. iii. 29, iv. 46, it is shortened into Beth-peor. Peor = Pisgah (Wellhausen).

abominable like that which they loved. We grow like the objects of our love. And if Baal-peor was 'the filthiest and

their glory shall fly away like a bird: there shall be no
12 birth, and none with child, and no conception. Though
they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them,
that there be not a man left: yea, woe also to them when
13 I depart from them! Ephraim, like as I have seen Tyre,
is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring
14 out his children to the slayer. Give them, O LORD:
what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb
15 and dry breasts. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for
there I hated them: because of the wickedness of their
doings I will drive them out of mine house: I will love

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foulest of the heathen gods' (Pusey), the unhappy Israelites had become bad as bad could be.

11. The result of this moral pollution is a progressive decay of the nation. Children born would quickly die, then the womb would be the grave, at last the womb would be absolutely barren. Wellhausen remarks how much better verse 16 would come in here between 11 and 12.

12. bring up their children: this is inappropriate after verse 11, but would follow well on verse 16.

when I depart from them: 1 Sam. xxviii. 15, 16. There is then a certain point in human depravity at which God departs from men, and they rapidly plunge down into irremediable ruin. Only a prophet can with clearness indicate when that point is reached; but every religious teacher must warn men that it may be reached.

13. like as I have seen Tyre. The text here, says Nowack, defies explanation. It is quite easy, with Pusey, to say Ephraim was like Tyre in pride, glory, riches, and also in the ultimate fall. But the English rendering cannot be got out of the Hebrew words, in which there is no **like,** and **planted** is in the feminine without a feminine noun. The modern commentators seek help in the LXX, and translate: 'Ephraim's children as I have seen are appointed for capture; Ephraim must bring out his children for slaughter.' On this follows a charitable prayer.

14. With such a doom in front, better not to be born.

15. in Gilgal. The national worship (cf. iv. 15, xii. 11) is responsible for the national sin, and that for the national decay.

mine house: i. e. Palestine (viii. 1). The image of the adulteress driven from the house is before the prophet's eye: Lev. xxi. 7, 14, xxii. 13; Num. xxx. 10.

them no more; all their princes are revolters. Ephraim 16
is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit:
yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay the beloved
fruit of their womb. My God will cast them away, 17
because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall
be wanderers among the nations.

Israel is a luxuriant vine, which putteth forth his fruit: 10
according to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied
his altars; according to the goodness of his land they

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princes are revolters: a play on words in the Heb., *Sarehem, Sorerim*, which Prof. G. A. Smith tries to get by 'their nobles are rebels'; might we say 'their princes are prancers,' as the word is used of a refractory animal, e. g. in iv. 16?

16. The verse is as much an interposition here as it would be suitable between 11 and 12. The comparison with a tree x. 1, xiv. 8.

17. My God: the prophet's, no longer the people's (cf. v. 12). Hosea, as the first to discover that God is Love, might well use this personal pronoun, and in his own response to the Divine love he might well feel how his people's sin destroyed their power to call God theirs. This is well brought out by Prof. G. A. Smith, p. 346.

wanderers: like Cain, Gen. iv. 12–14. Pusey in a long note comments on the extraordinary fulfilment of the threat in the history of Israel.

Hosea, says Prof. G. A. Smith, was the first to thus trace out the connexion between sexual immorality and national decay. It is Hosea too who first by his preaching of repentance showed that there was redemption even from this most insidious and corrupting of vices.

Whoever preaches against impurity with Hosea's explosive power should be careful to arm himself with the call to repentance (xiv. 1, 2) and with the promise of regeneration (xiii. 14).

x. *Again 'Puppet kings and puppet gods.'*

1. Israel. In taking this fruitful land from the Canaanite, Israel had adopted also its paganism. The altars (Mizbechoth) and the pillars (Mazzeboth) are the instruments of the worship with which the corruption of religion is connected.

made goodly: i. e. carved or ornamented. They are evil, not only in despite of God's goodness, but because He is good (Pusey). It is the echo of ii. 8.

2 have made goodly pillars. Their heart is divided; now
shall they be found guilty: he shall smite their altars, he
3 shall spoil their pillars. Surely now shall they say, We
have no king: for we fear not the LORD; and the king,
4 what can he do for us? They speak *vain* words,
swearing falsely in making covenants: therefore judge-
ment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.
5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the
calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn
over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced over it, for
6 the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It also

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2. divided: i. e. it is doubtful whether they are worshipping Yahweh or Baal.

be found guilty: rather, 'atone for it.'

smite their altars: *lit.* 'break the necks of,' because, says Wellhausen, images of the heads of calves were on the corners of the altars—a picturesque and searching suggestion.

3. now shall: cf. v. 7, the nearly approaching punishment.

no king: that is, as the last clause shows, though they have a king he is as good as useless. When the fear of the King of kings ceases, the king becomes a discredited and fruitless source of government.

4. The verse becomes clearer if we may follow the LXX, 'What can the king do for us?' ask the people. And the ironical answer is: 'speak words, swear falsely, make a covenant,' i. e. words, idle words, no effectual deeds. Apart from arbitrary corrections of the text, the second clause can only mean that judgement is so perverted, *sc.* in the king's mouth, that instead of being fruitful grain it is poisonous hemlock in the furrows of the field. This last expression occurs more appropriately in xii. 11.

5. the calves of Beth-aven (i. e. Beth-el, iv. 15), so far from saving the people, become an anxiety; they are carried off as spoil by the captor. This is the height of irony. Our English version glides over a number of grammatical difficulties, which can only be removed by correcting the text.

the priests: the scornful word is used which applied only to the priests of the Canaanitish cultus, *Chemarim* (2 Kings xxiii. 5; Zeph. i. 4), the word found in iv. 4 according to Prof. G. A. Smith's correction (q. v.). If we may read *jalilu* for *jagilu*, we get the more appropriate 'his priestlings shall howl over it.' The last words are a reminiscence of 1 Sam. iv. 22.

shall be carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb:
Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed
of his own counsel. *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off, 7
as foam upon the water. The high places also of Aven, 8
the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the
thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say
to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.
O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: 9
there they stood; that the battle against the children of

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6. When all other tribute is exhausted, the gold of the idol must be sent to king Pick-quarrel (cf. v. 13).

ashamed of his own counsel. By the change of one letter, ת into נ, Wellhausen gets the more intelligible 'shall be ashamed of his own idol.' But **counsel** gives a perfectly good sense, and it has the advantage of being the word in the text.

7. As Wellhausen points out, the translation accepted by the R. V. in the margin is correct. 'Samaria is cut off; her king is like (not 'foam,' which is the picturesque Rabbinical translation of a word not elsewhere found, but) a splinter on the waters,' i. e. carried away as helpless as a chip of wood in a foaming torrent.

8. The high places: cf. Amos vii. 9. Wellhausen strikes out **of Aven, the sin,** as a later Deuteronomic insertion. This is quite arbitrary. The contemptuous Aven is Beth-el, cf. iv. 15, not now House of Iniquity, but Iniquity itself, and so **the sin of Israel** is added.

Beth-el was on a hill (Joshua xvi. 1; 1 Sam. x. 3, xiii. 2; Gen. xxxv. 1; Judges i. 22; 2 Kings ii. 23).

thorn and **thistle.** This is illustrated by Gen. iii. 18, where alone this word for thistle occurs. Out of sixteen names for this class of plant, the two (*Kotz vedardan*) are combined in the original cursing of the soil, and in the exile of Israel from his promised land. The suggestion is very striking.

to the mountains, Cover us. The high places of the idolatrous worship are of use only to cover the shame of the worshippers. The idear everberates in the judgements of the N. T.: Luke xxiii. 30; Rev. vi. 16.

The blessing to Ephraim in Joseph gave a very different use of the hills: Gen. xlix. 26.

9 reverts to ix. 9. Wellhausen thinks the reference is not so much to the crime in Judges xix. 22, where Benjamin rather than Israel sinned, but to the origin of the monarchy itself in Gibeah, Saul's city (cf. xiii. 10, 11). Nowack agrees; Prof. G. A. Smith

10 iniquity should not overtake them in Gibeah. When it
is my desire, I will chastise them; and the peoples shall
be gathered against them, when they are bound to their
11 two transgressions. And Ephraim is an heifer that is
taught, that loveth to tread out *the corn*; but I have
passed over upon her fair neck: I will set a rider on
Ephraim; Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods.

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thinks the reference is only to Judges xix. 22 and perhaps Judges xix. 3. The latter part of the verse is unintelligible in the original, as in our version. Nowack gets a good sense by following the suggestion of P. Ruben: 'There (*sc.* at Gibeah) the sons of iniquity stood up against me: shall not war reach them in Gibeah?' Gibeah (Tell-el-Fûl) is in the southernmost part of the territory of Israel. The invading Assyrian from the north shall surely reach even that remote cradle of the iniquity of Israel.

10. The verse is difficult, and the text probably corrupt. No corrections, however, yield any better sense than the Revisers have got from it.

two transgressions. Keeping the Kethib, i. e. the text written, we may refer to Exod. xxi. 10, where the same word is used for 'duty of marriage,' i. e. conjugal cohabitation; the 'twofold cohabitation' is in keeping with the imagery of Hosea, to express the service of God and of idols. But taking the Keri (i. e. the alternative reading in the Heb. margin), we may refer either to (1) the two calves at Dan and Beth-el, or to (2) the sin of the king and that of the priest. The strange expression evokes from Pusey the wise comment: 'No slavery is so heavy as that which is self-imposed.'

11. Prof. G. A. Smith epitomizes the verse as 'the ambition of the people for spiritual results without a spiritual discipline.'

an heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread. Wellhausen and Nowack strike out **that is taught** as superfluous. But with what propriety can we accept such a judgement? The comparison is with a heifer that has been broken in, and is quite happy to tread the corn unmuzzled, as the Law required (Deut. xxv. 4), a very easy task. But God was going to pass the yoke over the heifer's neck, and in the hard discipline of the Exile to make it plough and break the clods.

Nowack boldly reads 'Israel' for 'Judah.' If we were at liberty to rewrite, as well as to interpret, the prophets, it would be a good change.

fair neck: 'kindled His relentings are': and the next verse becomes more tender still.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to 12
mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to
seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon
you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped 13
iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: for thou didst
trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.
Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and 14
all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled

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12. righteousness and **mercy** are here synonyms.

fallow ground: it lies unbroken, thorny, and hard; no seed of righteousness in it as yet.

rain righteousness. Wellhausen and Nowack prefer the LXX, which reads *peri* for *joreh*, and so get 'that the fruit of righteousness may come to you.' But how tame compared with the exquisite image of the **righteousness** which is of God, not springing from the seed of righteousness sown, but rained down as grace from heaven! Pusey finds here an exquisite reference to Christ our righteousness sent down from heaven.

13. In contrast with the precept of verse 12 is the sorrowful fact, wickedness ploughed in instead of righteousness sown, iniquity reaped instead of mercy. And in addition the bread wrested from the furrows is the empty grist of lies. 'Bodily delights,' says St. Gregory, 'when absent kindle a vehement longing, when had and eaten they satiate and disgust the eater. Spiritual delights are distasteful when unknown; when possessed they are longed for; and the more those who hunger after them feed upon them, the more they are hungered for.'

didst trust in thy way. Wellhausen prefers the LXX reading, which gives 'chariots.' Nowack agrees, and then argues that the clause is suspect, because Israel did *not* trust in his chariots and heroes, but appealed for help to Egypt or Assyria.

Here we are thankful for Pusey's simplicity, which accepts the text as it stands, and explains: 'So long as a man distrusts his ways of sin, there is hope of his conversion amid any depths of sin. When he *trusts in his ways*, all entrance is closed against the grace of God.'

thy mighty men might refer to the military help sought in Egypt or Assyria. The appeal to these Great Powers, instead of to Him who alone is great, always rankles in the prophet's heart.

14. thy peoples (marg.): viz. the foreign powers to whom Israel has rashly appealed.

Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel. Either (1) Shalman, mentioned as a Moabite tributary of Tiglath-pileser III in a cuneiform

Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed
15 in pieces with her children. So shall Beth-el do unto
you because of your great wickedness: at daybreak shall
the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

11 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called

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inscription. (Beth-arbel is the Galilean town Arbela, cf. 1 Macc. ix. 2, now Irbid, and we must suppose it was spoiled in the campaign mentioned ■ Kings xiii. 20; so Schrader, followed by Sayce.) Or, far more likely, (2) Shalmaneser IV, the Assyrian conqueror, is meant (2 Kings xvii. 3). Though this requires us to bring Hosea's period down later (cf. Amos vi. 2 for the campaign), or to suppose that the half-verse is a later insertion. So Wellhausen and Nowack, who think the reference to the petty princeling of Moab improbable and inconclusive. In our ignorance of the campaigns of Shalmaneser, we may suppose that he gained a victory at the Galilean town Beth-arbel; but no certainty can be gained on the point.

the mother . . . with her children should be 'on her children'; she is supposed to die trying to cover and protect them. See Gen. xxxii. 11.

15. Wellhausen corrects, according to the LXX, 'So I will do unto you, O house of Israel, &c.,' and according to his fancy, 'in storm shall the king of Israel be, &c.' But for those who feel any obligation to keep the Hebrew text as it stands the meaning will be: 'Beth-el, as the scene of the corrupt worship, has thus ruined the country; in the morning, i. e. when king Hoshea promised a better day (2 Kings xvii. 2), the kingship is cut off for ever.' But this reference to the dawning is difficult to explain, as Nowack urges. Fancy might suggest (comparing 2 Kings xix. 35) that it is a figurative description of a sudden and complete ruin. After the night of Israel's sin, one rises in the morning, and behold the king is dead.

Prof. G. A. Smith sums up the national ruin thus: the substance of the people scattered abroad; the national spirit dissipated; the national prestige humbled; the kings mere puppets; the prophets corrupted; the national vigour sapped by impurity; the idolatry conscious of its impotence.

Then the next chapter is a tender and regretful reminiscence of the love which God has shown to His ungrateful child.

xi. *The Fatherhood and Humanity of God* is Prof. G. A. Smith's beautiful title to the chapter.

1. The tenderness of this reminiscence is like the Gospel, and one cannot wonder that it is echoed in the beginning of the Gospel: Matt. ii. 15.

my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went 2
from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned
incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to go; 3
I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I
healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with 4

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my son: cf. Exod. iv. 22, 23, 'Israel is my son.' Pusey quotes the Fathers to show that Israel was the son of God in virtue of the Son of God who from him, according to the flesh, would come. And this connexion explains the reference of Matt. ii. 15, which otherwise would seem to be merely verbal. Wellhausen and Nowack object to the reading, and prefer to reconstruct from the LXX. They and Prof. G. A. Smith follow the LXX in verse 2, with a great improvement to clearness; thus:—

2. 'out of Egypt I called him; and the more I called them, the farther they went from me.' If we are to keep our English text we can only make sense by reading into the first **they** and the second **them** the word prophets; which is certainly very forced.

The election of Israel, the tiny fugitive people, lying between the great civilized empires of Egypt and Assyria, was the mystery of grace, on which the whole religious development of the people was built, and out of which the Gospel of Jesus Christ sprang. Nor did the sins of this guilty Ephraim, nor even of faithless Judah, frustrate this election of grace.

sacrificed unto the Baalim: cf. ii. 13, xiii. 1, 2.

3. to go: i. e. in the old English sense 'to walk,' as a mother teaches the infant. The word used is Aramaic: cf. vii. 15.

I took. Yes, as Wellhausen says, the letter *a* has fallen out of the text; it must have been the first person (so LXX). This carrying of the child in the wilderness is echoed in Deut. i. 31, xxxii. 11 and Num. xi. 12; Isa. lxiii. 9.

healed: cf. Ezek. xv. 26; viz. in the childish sicknesses of the wilderness, e. g. by the brazen serpent.

4. The image changes from the child to the heifer (cf. x. 11). God led the stubborn heifer not with cords, but with love; human ties which, though the most beautiful in the world, can be resisted and broken. As Gomer resisted Hosea's tender and changeless love, so men resist the love of God.

'No man cometh unto me,' said Christ, 'except the Father *draw* him.' Augustine says: 'Do not conceive of long journeyings. When thou believest, then thou comest. For to Him who is everywhere men come by loving, not by travelling.' God loves, and so draws; when man loves, the drawing is effectual; when man refuses, the silken cords do not compel.

bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off
the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them.
5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the
Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.
6 And the sword shall fall upon his cities, and shall
consume his bars, and devour *them*, because of their own
7 counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from

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as they that take off the yoke on their jaws. The commentators give up the clause, and propose emendations. As the words stand in our version we must interpret them thus: the kindly driver of the toiling heifer lifts the yoke to ease the strain (why from the jaws we cannot explain): cf. Lev. xxvi. 13 and the parallel thought in Isa. lxiii. 13, 14.

I laid meat before them. The lifting of the yoke from the jaws liberated the mouth for eating, as a carter takes the bit out of the horse's mouth and hangs the corn-bag round his neck instead: cf. Ps. lxxviii. 24–29.

5. This quick revulsion of thought would surprise us in any one but Hosea. In him we are accustomed to it.

He shall not return: modern commentators follow the LXX and carry the *lo* (not) back into verse 4 as *lo* (to him). This makes the verse much more easy, for there is no 'but,' only 'and.' It is: 'he shall return into Egypt, and the Assyrian shall be his king.'

6. Prof. G.A.Smith surrenders the verse as a weakening and irrelevant insertion. Wellhausen and Nowack suggest emendations.

shall fall: cf. x. 14, x. 6; the meaning of the word here is not found elsewhere in Hebrew. But the idea is appropriate; and, as Pusey says, the prophecy received repeated fulfilment, even to the rage of the Zealots before the destruction of Jerusalem.

bars. This word in Jer. l. 36 is translated 'boasters' in a similar connexion. This connects much better with the words **because of their own counsels.** King Hoshea's conspiracy with So, king of Egypt, instead of delivering him from Assyria, brought him into Assyrian captivity.

7. Nowack gives up the whole verse as impossible, following Wellhausen.

are bent: *lit.* 'are hung to it,' as if backsliding were the hinge on which they turned. But the phrase is very forced. The remainder of the verse is so hopeless that even Pusey passes it by unexplained. Prof. G. A. Smith explains rather than translates: 'and though they (*sc.* the prophets) call them upwards, none of them can lift them.' In this uncertainty I would suggest that **they** refers to the 'boasters' in verse 6. Though the

me: though they call them to *him that is* on high, none at all will exalt *him*. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? 8
how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine 9
anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after 10

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boastful king and his counsellors appeal to Heaven and direct the people's thoughts to God, they will not lift up the degraded people; God has withdrawn; the religious talk is unreal:—

'The words fly up, the thoughts remain below,
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.'

8. But again the irrepressible and yearning love of God breaks out in tenderness. This (verses 8, 9) is, according to Prof. G. A. Smith, 'the greatest passage in Hosea.' Justice and mercy strive together; God determines that Israel shall be both justly punished and mercifully relieved.

deliver thee. This translation spoils the sense. It should be:—

'How am I to give thee up, O Ephraim?
How am I to let thee go, O Israel?
How give thee up, like Admah;
How make thee like Zeboim?'

Admah . . . Zeboim: cities of the plain (Deut. xxix. 22, 23). Why mention these obscurer towns instead of Sodom and Gomorrah? Is it a humbling of Israel's pride even in the expression of the Divine compassion?

compassions. The Hebrew word means rather 'consolations': cf. Deut. xxxii. 36.

9. execute the fierceness: 1 Sam. xxviii. 18.

return: the same phrase as ii. 9. It means not so much repeating the same treatment as treating the same object, i. e. 'I will not come again to Ephraim to destroy him.' The august reason for this compassion wants nothing of evangelic grandeur: cf. Num. xxiii. 19.

Holy One must, as Nowack says, have an ethical as well as a merely theological colouring: Isa. xii. 6.

I will not enter into the city. This, according to Prof. G. A. Smith, is nonsense. A very trifling change gives us: 'I am not willing to consume.'

the LORD, who shall roar like a lion: for he shall roar,
and the children shall come trembling from the west.
11 They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and
as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will make
them to dwell in their houses, saith the LORD.
12 Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood, and the
house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with

Pusey, with splendid courage in defending the text as it stands, would interpret: 'God would not enter into the city, as He did into the cities of the plain, viz. to destroy it.' This is indeed heroic. The clause belongs to verse 9 in the Hebrew, and not to verse 10 as in R. V. It makes a climax.

10, 11 are not connected with what has just been said. Prof. G. A. Smith considers them an exilic insertion. The exiles are to return from the west, and the south (Egypt), and the north (Assyria). This certainly sounds more appropriate from a writer in the Exile than from a pre-exilic prophet. But whether Hosea's or no, the words and the promise are alike exquisite.

like a lion: cf. Amos iii. 8. So Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. v. 5). No sound is more awe-inspiring than the lion's roar; and when God utters His voice, not only do His foes tremble, but His ransomed children are filled with awe; they return unto Him with fearfulness, and contrition, and wonder.

11. dove: common in Palestine, proverbial for its swiftness of flight and its timidity; it flew faster when it was frightened (Ps. lv. 6, 7; Isa. lx. 8). It returned to its own cot from any distance to which it was carried.

12 belongs in the Hebrew, and in the sense, to ch. xii.

xii, xiii. *The Final Argument, going back upon the history of Israel to explain the backsliding, calling to, and yet despairing of, repentance, ends in a more hopeless doom than ever.*

xii. *The People and their Father Jacob.*

xi. **12. falsehood.** Jacob was from the first a deceiver and a transplanter. The deceit of Ephraim lay in the tortuous dealings with Assyria and Egypt, and in the abominations of the cultus.

but Judah. We are certainly tempted here to accept the view that the reference to Judah is a later interpolation. The Hebrew, very difficult to render, may mean, as the margin shows, precisely opposite things, either a commendation of Judah's faithfulness or a condemnation of Judah's fall.

Perhaps original words of Hosea's were altered by a later Judaean writer. The adverse rendering in the margin, 'and

God, and is faithful with the Holy One. Ephraim 12
feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he
continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they
make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into
Egypt. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, 2
and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according
to his doings will he recompense him. In the womb he 3
took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he

Judah is yet unstedfast with God, and with the Holy One who is faithful,' is approved by Ewald, Hitzig, Wünsche, &c.: cf. vi. 4. Nowack alters a word, and gets: 'Judah is yet trusted with God and true to the Holy One.'

Holy One: a word, like Elohim, in the plural, in later Hebrew used for 'God' (Prov. ix. 10, xxx. 3); 'its use,' says Pusey, 'is founded on the mystery of the Trinity.' Wellhausen adopts Cornill's bold conjecture, and reads *Qedeshim* instead of *Qedushim*, and changes the last word; 'profanes himself with Qedeshim' (cf. Num. xxv. 3, 5), i. e. the Sodomite priests of the Baal-worship. But this is too ingenious.

xii. **1.** The **wind** and the **east wind** represent the foreign alliances, which are vanity and worse; for while the wind is unsubstantial, the Sirocco, or south-east wind of Palestine, is parching and withering, destructive to vegetation, unwholesome to man and beast, and in its whirling force often a hurricane of ruin (cf. Job xxvii. 21; Jer. xviii. 17).

desolation: *shod*, but LXX reads *shav*, 'fraud.'

oil, as the chief product of Palestine, stands for all the wealth which king Hoshea sent into Egypt to secure the help of So (cf. Isa. xxx. 6, 7). It will be remembered that Hoshea first became tributary to Shalmaneser of Assyria, and then sought the help of Egypt to rebel against him. This windy policy is not only lies, but desolation: ▪ Kings xvii. 4.

2. Judah. This sudden intrusion of Judah is so destructive of the sense that modern commentators unhesitatingly take it as a slip for Israel. The LXX omits the 'and,' and if we may follow that reading we have a clear sense: 'Yahweh has a controversy with Israel, to visit on Jacob according to his ways.' The need to keep Israel in verse 2 is emphasized by verse 3. Hosea, as Wellhausen remarks, shows a knowledge of the history of Jacob, as recorded in the Yahwist-narrative of Genesis.

To move Ephraim to repentance the prophet recalls the election, the faith, the power, of the Patriarch Israel.

took his brother by the heel: Gen. xxv. 26 (cf. xxvii. 36).

4 had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel,
and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto
him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with
5 us; even the LORD, the God of hosts; the LORD is his
6 memorial. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy
and judgement, and wait on thy God continually.

The Hebrew word is *'aqab*, the presumable root of *Ja-'aqab* (Jacob), just as **had power with God** is *sarah eth Elohim*, the presumable origin of *Yisra'el* (Israel): Gen. xxxii. 28. Nowack confuses the whole passage by not allowing that verses 3–5 are intended to describe the virtues and valour of Jacob.

4. The scene at Peniel (Gen. xxxii. 29) is put before the scene at Beth-el (Gen. xxviii. 19) and the flight to Aram (verse 12).

wept, not mentioned in Genesis; but, as Pusey says, tears and entreaties are closely allied, 'implorare est fletu rogare'; cf. French *implorer, pleurer*.

with us: Wellhausen reads 'him' for 'us'; but it is more striking to say that in speaking with Israel the Patriarch God spoke with His descendants too.

5. the LORD: i.e. Yahweh, the name given in Exod. iii. 14, 15.

is his memorial. This name of revelation we best honour by keeping the Hebrew four letters as near as possible, viz. *Y-h-v-h*. But the vowel-points which turn it into 'Jehovah' are those of 'Adonai' (Lord), the word read by the Rabbis in place of the sacred 'Tetragrammaton.' The pronunciation Yahweh probably expresses the meaning of the word, which is the third person singular of the verb 'to be,' whether in a neuter or in a causative sense. The 'memorial' asserts for ever the self-existence of the Being who is the Author of all existence.

On the great Day of Atonement the high priest pronounced the name ten times, and all the people fell on their faces, saying, 'Blessed be the glorious name of His kingdom for ever and ever.' But it is said after 322 B.C., the time of Simeon the Just, the high priests disused it, for fear that its sanctity should be violated. Even by their reverence the chosen people violated the purpose of God.

6. This mention of the sacred name, combined with the example of the Patriarch, is a strong plea to deceitful and deceived Ephraim to return.

to thy God: it is 'through' or 'by' thy God. For the moment repentance is thought of, not as returning to God, but as returning to righteousness by His aid.

keep mercy and judgement. Like Mic. vi. 8 the prophet

He is a trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his 7
hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Surely 8
I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my
labours they shall find in me none iniquity that were sin.
But I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt; 9
I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the

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dwells on the duties to men, because, says Pusey, men cannot deceive themselves so easily about their duties to their neighbour as about their duties to God.

Nowack, having made the passage obscure by his arbitrary renderings, proposes to strike out 3^b–6 as a later interpolation.

7. From the call to repentance Hosea characteristically returns to renew his sharp reproaches for present iniquity. 'Canaan,' he suddenly cries. So the old inhabitant of the land was called, meaning 'trafficker' (Zeph. i. 11). So the prophet calls degenerate Ephraim. For the false balances, see Amos ii. 6, viii. 5.

oppress: better, 'defraud'; cf. Mic. ii. 2. The Phoenicians, or Canaanites, were in Homer infamous for their greed; they were called 'gnawers' and 'money-lovers' (*Od.* xiv. 283, xv. 413). For this opprobrious connexion of Israel with Canaan, see Ezek. xvi. 3: 'Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was an Hittite.'

8. Ephraim's defence: 'I did not wish to do wrong; that were sin! I only wished to get rich.' He did not know that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is not necessary, with Wellhausen, following the LXX, to break off the second clause, making it the prophet's reply to Ephraim's defence: 'all his gain does not suffice for the guilt which he has contracted.'

9. The tent-life of the wilderness was a trial and pain, for which the settlement in the promised land was readily exchanged. But it was also a blessing and a revelation, a walking in mystery and wonder, the Divine presence always felt and often manifest. The Feast of Tabernacles was the yearly remembrance of this wonderful pilgrim experience (Lev. xxiii. 39–43; Neh. viii. 14–18). Pusey appositely quotes a Jewish writer: 'Whoso begins to think himself a citizen in this world, and not a foreigner, him God biddeth, leaving his ordinary dwelling, to remove into a temporary lodging, in order that, leaving these thoughts, he may learn to acknowledge that he is only a stranger in this world and not a citizen, in that he dwells as in a stranger's hut, and so should not attribute too much to the shadow of his beams, but dwell under the shadow of the Almighty.' This verse, therefore, is a threat or a promise according to the insight with which it is examined. The 'dwelling in tents' in the Exile of Babylon was

10 days of the solemn feast. I have also spoken unto the
prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and by the
11 ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes. Is
Gilead iniquity? they are altogether vanity; in Gilgal
they sacrifice bullocks: yea, their altars are as heaps in
12 the furrows of the field. And Jacob fled into the field
of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he

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a blessing: there Yahweh found His people again as in the wilderness (ii. 14). Through missing this spiritual connexion Nowack denies that the **solemn feast** could be the Feast of Tabernacles, 'a feast of unbridled joy.' He thinks also the connexion of this feast with the desert-journey of the Exodus was only invented in the Exile, and by the Priestly Code writers. He changes the word into 'in the days of the foretime.'

10. As God in His pleading spoke by the wilderness experience—and will do again in the Exile—so He used, and will use, prophets, giving them visions, and commanding such similitudes as Hosea's relation with Gomer.

I do not say that this connexion is certain; but Wellhausen says that no satisfactory explanation of the verse can be given.

11. This verse is still more perplexing, and commentators give up hope of tracing its connexion with the foregoing or following. All we can do is to interpret the verse by itself. It is an echo of vi. 8, when Gilead is a centre of the debased cultus.

they are altogether vanity: who are meant is not said; the text seems very obscure. Still, we can force a sense: 'If Gilead has become iniquity, they (the Gileadites) have become vanity, i. e. nothingness.'

Gilgal represents the west as Gilead the east of Jordan. The word 'heaps' (Heb. *Gallim*) is a play on the word *Gil-gal*, which meant a stone circle erected for primitive worship. It is not clear why the common sacrifice of bullocks should be reprehended. Hitzig changed the word *shevarim* into *lashshedim*, and translated 'sacrificed to demons' (Deut. xxxii. 17; Ps. cvi. 37).

as heaps: like the ruins of Stonehenge, a wonder and a reproach of idolatry in the eyes of those who come after: cf. x. 4.

12. We return to the illustrative and didactic history of the Patriarch. In the connexion of the chapter, Jacob's journey to the east, and the return with a beloved wife and two bands, must be a gleam of encouragement to the guilty nation which is to go into the desert and dwell in tents again.

field of Aram: Deut. xxvi. 5; cf. Gen. xxxvi. 35, 'field of Moab.' Aram is Syria, Mesopotamia, Gen. xxviii. 5.

kept *sheep*. And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel 13
up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.
Ephraim hath provoked to anger most bitterly: therefore 14
shall his blood be left upon him, and his reproach shall
his Lord return unto him.

When Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he exalted 13
himself in Israel: but when he offended in Baal, he died.
And now they sin more and more, and have made them 2

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kept: 'sheep' is not expressed; Gen. xxix. 20, 28. By the analogy of Arabic it may mean 'kept watch' (Wellhausen).

13. A new echo of verse 10. Another gleam of hope in coming punishment. God does not leave His oppressed people in Egypt; Moses is raised up. Perhaps He will not leave them in exile. Will an Ezekiel, a second Isaiah, a Daniel, nay, a Cyrus-Messiah, be raised up to restore them?

14. The clouds close again and hide the gleam, in Hosea's rapid way. To the charge of deceit in verse 7, and the implied charge of idolatry in verse 11, is added the third of the damnatory triad, the bloodshed: see 2 Kings xvii. 17. For the threat which follows, cf. Isa. lxv. 7. Prof. G. A. Smith says: 'I cannot trace the argument here'; and Wellhausen says: 'the sense is half-intelligible, the text from **bitterly** to **upon him** totally corrupt.' We must be content, therefore, if our understanding of this difficult chapter remains obscure.

xiii. *The Last Judgement of Israel.* We have here a clear recapitulation of all Hosea's threats, to be followed in one final chapter by a desperate call to repentance.

1. When Ephraim spake. Wellhausen seeks for a historic occasion. But the verse is rather a *résumé* of the history of the Northern Kingdom. Accepting the rather doubtful translation of the first clause, we may quote Bp. Hall: 'Ephraim was once very aweful, so as, while he spake, the rest of the tribes were ready to tremble.' It can hardly refer to Joshua, who belonged to that tribe (Pusey), but it sums up the martial glories of Israel under Ahab and Jehu.

exalted himself (Amos vi. 13), a slight change makes this 'Prince was he in Israel.'

offended in Baal: 1 Kings xvi. 31.

died: spiritually.

2. This polemic against the images used in the worship of Yahweh is the seed of the great harvest in Isa. 40–44.

molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice
3 kiss the calves. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.
4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no god but me, and beside me there

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according to their own understanding, or 'image' (as LXX reads).

they say of them. Wellhausen and Prof. G. A. Smith, 'they speak to them,' *sc.* deaf and dumb images, as if they could hear.

Then the sentence **the men that sacrifice kiss the calves** becomes an outbreak of scorn like 1 Kings xix. 18. The marginal reading, 'the sacrificers of men,' might be taken literally (Mic. vi. 7). But the sin of human sacrifice is, as Wellhausen says, too great and shocking an offence to be introduced in a way so casual and even derisive. And the translation of the Hebrew words, 'sacrificers of men' as 'sacrificing men' is justified by a similar phrase in Mic. v. 4, *nesike-adam*, and in Gen. xvi. 12, *pere-adam*.

Kissing was an act of homage in the East, on hand or foot, knee or shoulder, and a token of divine honour to idol (1 Kings xix. 18) or God (Ps. ii. 12). Kissing the hand to the moon is worship in Job xxxi. 26, 27.

3 echoes vi. 4. The last clause is our authority for showing that the Hebrews had chimneys in the roof (Wellhausen). Pusey remarks that the morning cloud and the dew well signify the bright but brief prosperity under Jeroboam II. 'Bright and glistening with light is the early dew; in an hour it is gone as if it had never been. Glowing and gilded by the sun is the morning cloud; while you admire its beauty its hues have vanished.' In the image of the chaff, the whirlwind, in place of the winnowing wind, indicates the violence of the removal from their land: cf. iv. 19, viii. 7. The chaff, Ps. i. 4; Isa. xvii. 13, xli. 15.

4. This is a blast from the trumpet of Sinai: Exod. xx. 2, 3. When God in Christ was recognized as the Saviour: the language was used of Christ: Acts iv. 12. It is not enough to recognize God as Saviour; He must be recognized as the only Saviour. To admit any power even beside Him is to introduce an idol, another God (Pusey). The LXX inserts here a passage like those

is no saviour. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the 5
land of great drought. According to their pasture, so 6
were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was
exalted: therefore have they forgotten me. Therefore 7
am I unto them as a lion: as a leopard will I watch by
the way: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of 8
her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart: and
there will I devour them like a lion; the wild beast shall
tear them. It is thy destruction, O Israel, that *thou art* 9

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in Amos iv. 13, v. 8, 9, ix. 5, 6, very fine, as a contrast to the morning cloud, the dew, the chaff, and the smoke: 'I am the Lord thy God who establishes the heaven and founds the earth, whose hands founded all the host of heaven, and I did not show them to thee to walk after them.'

5. I did know thee: Deut. ii. 7; Amos iii. 2. Wellhausen suggests the change of a *d* into *r*, i. e. in Heb. ד into ר, which gives 'I pastured thee' instead of 'I knew thee,' and then the pasturing in verse 6 is more natural.

6. If we might read with Nowack *chirotham* it would be simpler, 'as they pastured, they were filled.' Assuming Deuteronomy to be later than Hosea, it is remarkable how the prophet's language had penetrated the national conscience: cf. Deut. vi. 11, 12, viii. 11–17, xxxii. 15, 18.

7–9. The Lord our help turned to be our destroyer! The fierceness of the lion, the swiftness of the leopard, the savageness of the bear—such are the qualities of an avenging God.

7. 'as a leopard on the way to Assyria.' The Hebrew word *Ashur* might be a verb as our translators took it, 'I will watch,' or, as Prof. G. A. Smith, 'I will leap'; but it means with different vowel points 'Assyria,' and the LXX so took it. And, as Wellhausen says, this is required to justify there in verse 8.

For the use of animals in such imagery, see vii. 11, 12 and v. 12, 14.

8. The Syrian bear is ferocious to an enemy, tender and self-sacrificing for her young: cf. 2 Sam. xvii. 8.

the caul of their heart: the lion is said to go instinctively straight to the heart of its prey, tear it out and suck the blood. This fearful threat, the only way by which God could get at the hard and callous heart of Ephraim, was carried out. In 734 the Assyrians had depopulated Gilead and Galilee; in 725 the capital was invested; and by 721 the whole population was carried into captivity.

10 against me, against thy help. Where now is thy king,
that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges,
of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?
11 I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken
12 him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is
13 bound up; his sin is laid up in store. The sorrows of
a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an
unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the

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9. Yet this ruin of a nation was brought on by itself. The margin reveals how difficult it is to translate the five words of which the verse is composed. Prof. G. A. Smith goes to the LXX, and renders: 'When he has destroyed thee, O Israel, who will help thee?' I wish it were possible to take our R. V. as the real translation. The words are: 'Thy destruction, Israel, that in (against) me, in (against) thy help.' But it is obvious that neither A. V. nor R. V. does more than guess. It is one of the passages which it is better to let alone; for to get meaning out of it is only to read into it what we wish.

10. This goes back to the mixed origin of the kingship in 1 Sam. viii. 19. But its special application is to the broken line of usurpers and idolaters which had occupied the Northern throne.

in all thy cities. Though this gives sense, Houtsma's very slight changes give a much better sense, and must be considered brilliant as a conjecture. 'Where is then thy king that he may help thee, and all thy princes that they may judge thee; of whom thou saidst, Give me kings and princes.'

11. Pusey has innumerable quotations from the Fathers to show how a wrong prayer is better unanswered; to answer it is to send punishment and dole. But the statement of the verse is historical rather than ethical. Jeroboam was given in anger, when the ten tribes broke from Rehoboam, and Hoshea, the last king, was taken away in anger, when the iniquity of Ephraim had yielded its full harvest and was stored in the barn of God.

12. In Deut. xxxii. 34, 35 we have the echo of this. In Rom. ii. 4–6 is another echo. This image of accumulating guilt, and the heart hardening because the punishment is delayed (cf. Eccles. viii. 11), sums up what has gone before.

13. The image is shifting. The travail of the woman is mentioned to illustrate the suddenness of the punishment which is to fall on Ephraim; but that suggests the folly of Ephraim, the child that ought to be born, but is, like Matthew Arnold's description of the age, 'powerless to be born.' As there is no

place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom 14
them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them
from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O grave,
where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from
mine eyes. Though he be fruitful among his brethren, 15
an east wind shall come, the breath of the LORD coming

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real repentance there can be no real birth: 2 Kings xix. 3. But for him to stop in the mouth of the womb means death for mother and child. It is high time for him to come forth. He does not. Therefore comes death.

14. It would be beautiful to take this as a sudden promise of mercy breaking in at that dark moment when the stillborn child and travailing mother perished in the hopeless Exile. Such a promise of resurrection accords with Isaiah and Ezekiel. Such a rendering is approved by Ewald and Hitzig, and adopted by our own version. And Paul must have read the great words so in quoting them for his doctrine of resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 55. Pusey quotes Jewish interpreters who favour this view, e. g. 'I went with the angel Kippod, and Messiah son of David went with me, until I came to the gates of hell. When the prisoners of hell saw the light of the Messiah, they wished to receive him, saying, This is he who will bring us out of this darkness, as it is written, "I will redeem them from the hand of hell."' And with such authorities many may be content to err. But the word translated 'repentance' is really 'pity.' And this, together with the context, shuts us up to the view which Wellhausen, Nowack, and Prof. G. A. Smith support. The verse is a threat of implacable doom. 'Shall I ransom them from the hand of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? Where are thy plagues, O death? Where is thy destruction, Sheol? (i. e. bring forth the plagues and destruction for the guilty people). Pity shall be hid from my eyes.' It is the misfortune of the brevity of Hebrew diction, at its emotional heights, that a sentence can be a statement or an interrogative, and thus the meaning may be positive or negative.

15 states the exact form of the doom just announced; the actual calamity which would come twelve years later.

Though he be fruitful: *Yaphri*—which is the meaning of the name Ephraim.

among his brethren. It is tempting to read in the Hebrew 'reed-grass' for 'brethren,' as this is so suitable to the image of the tree planted by the water (Ps. i. 3), withered by the pitiless Sirocco.

up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry,
and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the
16 treasure of all pleasant vessels. Samaria shall bear her
guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall
fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
and their women with child shall be ripped up.
14 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou

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he shall spoil: i. e. the enemy, the Assyrian, symbolized by the east wind.

16. First **she**, then **they**, and lastly **their women with child**, are an extraordinary variation of number and gender. Nowack thinks the last phrase may be an insertion from the all-too-familiar atrocities of ancient warfare. Cf. x. 14; 2 Kings viii. 12, xv. 16; Ps. cxxxvii. 9; Amos i. 13; Nahum iii. 10; Isa. xiii. 16.

This prophesied desolation of Samaria is most curious to trace. Re-peopled by heathen (2 Kings xvii. 24), destroyed by John Hyrcanus (Jos. *Ant.* xiii. 10, 3), fortified by Herod (Jos. *Ant.* xiv. 4, 4 and 5, 3) and called Sebaste, after Augustus (Sebastos), showing on a coin of Nero found on the site the image it is thought of the old Ashtoreth, the traditional burying-place of John Baptist, rifled by Julian, then the see of a Christian bishopric, now known as Sebastieh, it offers no trace for ever of the powerful throne which once flourished there, or of the guilty people who there filled up the measure of their iniquities.

xiv. *Over the stormy waters of Judgement expands the bow of Mercy.* Cheyne (Introduction to Robertson Smith's *The Prophets of Israel*) says that the passage belongs to a later prophet, and is replete with the imagery and thought of such passages as Jer. xxxi. 10–20. And after the final doom pronounced in ch. xiii it is certainly difficult to explain this exquisite call to repentance and promise of pardon. But it must be remembered that this paradoxical mingling of mercy and judgement is the peculiar characteristic of Hosea. It is the note struck in ch. ii which interprets the experience of the prophet with his erring wife (especially verses 14 ff.). And though we cannot explain the amazing revulsion in this passage, and though it is not justified by anything in the later history of Ephraim and the Northern Kingdom, we may admit, with Prof. G. A. Smith, that it is a genuine oracle of Hosea's, even if it is to be inserted in the body of the book rather than put at the close.

All difficulties apart, we should surrender ourselves to the beauty and the glory of this message from the heart of God. Whether it is Hosea's or not, it is God's; whether it harmonizes

hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and 2
return unto the LORD: say unto him, Take away all
iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we
render *as* bullocks *the offering of* our lips. Asshur shall 3
not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will
we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our

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with the doom of ch. xiii or not, it is in perfect accord with the Gospel which we know, and with the God who will not have any to perish, the God who so loved the world, the God who in Christ receives sinners and calls them to repentance. The chapter rises above all national and temporal considerations, and carries us up to the eternal Cross and the eternal Saviour, calling men to repentance.

1. unto the LORD. The preposition, as Pusey says, implies 'quite up to' Him. To see that we have fallen by our own iniquity is the beginning of true repentance. Cf. vi. 1, xii. 6, also iii. 5.

fallen by thine iniquity: cf. xiii. 9.

2. words: in contrast to the meaningless dumb ritual. 'So, at the Reformation, in place of the frozen ritualism of the Church there broke forth, as though it were birds in Springtime, a great burst of hymns and prayers, with the clear notes of the Gospel in the common tongue. So intolerable was the memory of what has been, that it was even enacted that henceforth no sacrament should be dispensed but the Word should be given to the people along with it' (Prof. G. A. Smith, p. 343). Pusey agrees with this interpretation. Ritualist and Presbyterian both know that ritualism without living and true words is dead.

that which is good. 'What good had they to offer?' asks Pusey. The answer must be, a heart-repentance in place of the idle and hypocritical sacrifices.

bullocks . . . our lips. This does not, as Nowack says, defy elucidation. Nor is it necessary to read with the LXX. and the Syriac, 'fruit from our lips.' However strong the expression is, it is quite clear. Words take the place of formal offerings, therefore lips take the place of the costly bullocks that were offered. Ps. lxix. 30, 31 is an exact comment on it: cf. also Pss. l. 13, 14, li. 19; Heb. xiii. 15.

3. The delusive trust in Assyria and Egypt which the prophet had so often reprehended (v. 13), and the images used in worship, are laid aside. The return is to God Himself, the true help.

horses: *sc.* from Egypt (1 Kings x. 28). See Isa. xxx. 2–16, xxxi. 1; Ezek. xvii. 15.

4 gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will
heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine
5 anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew
unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth
6 his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and

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the fatherless: cf. Ps. x. 14. The people, deserted by human helpers, think of the Father, and find God's fatherhood as the prodigal did. The thought goes back to ii. 23.

4–6. *God's reply to the words of penitence and trust.*

4. their . . . him. Israel thought of now individually, now collectively.

love them freely: cf. xi. 1. How does He heal backsliding? by the grace of love, and by a free forgiveness. This is the Gospel as Paul preached it.

5. In contrast with the blighted tree of xiii. 15 Israel is now to be a flower, a tree, nay, a pine-clad mountain, with unfailing springs.

dew (cf. vi. 3) falling every morning, in contrast with xiii. 3, where it denotes instability.

the lily: the image of fruitfulness: cf. Isa. xxvii. 6 (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxi. 5); it multiplies rapidly, but is weak in the root and soon fades. A new image is therefore added.

roots as Lebanon. Wellhausen and Nowack would expect a plant, not a mountain, and try to change the text accordingly. They question whether 'strike roots' is a Hebrew phrase. But the whole beauty of the promise lies in the paraprosdokian; you expect 'he shall cast forth his roots like an oak or a cedar,' but instead of this comes 'like Lebanon,' that great Mount Hermon in the Anti-Libanus, which, as Prof. G. A. Smith says, dominates all Hosea's land, the snow-peak which gathers the clouds and devolves the streams, which rests the eyes of weary travellers in the unwholesome plain, and lifts up the hearts of pilgrims to the heavens. Sixty miles away, in the Jebel Druze, the amphitheatres were arranged that Hermon might fill the horizon of the spectators. To be therefore like this deep-rooted, steadfast, far-seen, and much-loved mountain were better than to be like the fairest of its flowers and the stateliest of its trees: cf. Ps. xcii. 12; Isa. xxxv. 2.

6. And yet Israel shall be like a tree too, one of the cedars on Lebanon, with its spreading branches. Wellhausen says the use of the two words for 'roots' (*Sharash*) and 'branches' (*Jonkoth*) is late; but whenever the words were written, they are of thrilling spiritual beauty.

his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall 7
return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any 8
more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir tree; from me is thy fruit found.

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the olive tree, which bears its silver-grey foliage winter and summer (Ps. lii. 8; Jer. xi. 16), a beautiful symbol of the unfailing grace of God.

smell as Lebanon: clear mountain air scented with pines. The lower slopes of Lebanon are clothed also with aromatic shrubs, myrtles, lavender, and fragrant reeds. 'As you enter the valley (between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon),' says R. Tauchum, 'straightway the scent meets you.'

7. Now the prophet speaks. 'They shall return and sit under His (*sc.* God's) shadow,' so by a very slight change Wellhausen, Nowack, *et al.*, following LXX: cf. Ezek. xxxi. 6.

revive as the corn: the 'as' is not in the Hebrew. Pusey sees the mystical meaning: they will be the bread and wine, the body of Christ. This is surely better than re-writing the passage, as Prof. G. A. Smith does: 'They shall live well watered as a garden, till they flourish like the vine.'

the scent thereof: the margin 'his memorial' is right.

wine of Lebanon. Pusey says the grapes of Lebanon are as large as plums, and the wine is the best in the world. He quotes Œdmann, ii. 193. Nowack ignores this, and questions whether such northerly wine could be good. Formerly Israel was a luxuriant but empty vine (x. 1; cf. Isa. v. 2). But the new vine of prophecy is Christ. Branches in that vine bear fruit.

8. It will be noted that 'shall say' is not in the original. Perhaps the marginal rendering can stand. And then the whole verse may read as God's last word to His repentant and restored people. The difficulties, as the commentators see, are great; but it is well, if possible, to take the text just as it stands.

Ephraim (says Yahweh), **what have I to do any more with idols?** (i. e. God looks at His people and sees no more any strange god among them.) **I have answered** (cf. ii. 21) **and will regard him.** (It would of course be easier if it were 'will regard thee.') **I am like a green fir tree.** (It is unusual to compare God with a tree, especially when the whole imagery has made Ephraim the tree hitherto; but we may support the rendering with Cant.

9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?
prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the
LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them; but
transgressors shall fall therein.

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ii. 3 as well as with verse 7.) **From me is thy fruit found.** (Cf. ii. 8, 23; John xv. 4, 5.)

The alternative is to make a little dialogue of the verse. Ephraim: 'What have I to do with idols?' God: 'I have answered, and will regard him.' Ephraim: 'I am like a green fir-tree.' God: 'From me is thy fruit found.' Even this forced ingenuity is better than Wellhausen's extraordinary re-shaping of the text to make 'I have answered and will regard him' into 'I am his Anat and his Aschera,' i. e. I take the place of his idols.

In justification of comparing God with the Berosh (fir, or rather cypress), we may quote what Pusey says of this tree in the Lebanon: 'It is a tall stately tree (Isa. lv. 13), in whose branches the stork could make its nest (Ps. civ. 17); its wood precious enough to be employed in the temple (1 Kings v. 8, 10, vi. 15, 34), fine enough to be used in all sorts of musical instruments (2 Sam. vi. 5), strong and pliant enough to be used for spears (Nahum ii. 3). It was part of the glory of Lebanon (Isa. xxxvii. 24, lx. 13). A traveller says: Each tree is in itself a study for the landscape-painter—some on account of their enormous stems and branches. Would you see trees in all their splendour and beauty? then enter these wild groves, that have never been touched by the pruning-knife of art.'

If therefore among His works anything may be used as a symbol of Him, Hosea is justified in putting into God's mouth, 'I am like a green fir tree.'

9. This, whether Hosea's own final word or the comment of a later reader (Wellhausen, Prof. G. A. Smith, Nowack), is a fit ending to such a tale of mingled judgement and mercy as the prophet has unfolded.

wise: cf. Ps. cvii. 43, lxxiii. 16, 17; Jer. ix. 12; Dan. xii. 10; John viii. 47, xviii. 37.

the ways of the LORD: cf. Deut. xxxii. 4; Job xxvi. 14, xxxvi. 23; Ps. xviii. 30, lxxvii. 19, cxlv. 17; Dan. iv. 37.

transgressors fall: Prov. x. 29, xi. 5, xv. 9. The stumbling in the way of revelation is a mystery occurring even to this day Ps. lxix. 22; Luke ii. 34; John ix. 39, and especially 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; 2 Cor. ii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

AND

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

JOEL

INTRODUCTION

To determine the date and appreciate the message of this brief but beautiful little book, let us glance at Nowack's invaluable synopsis. The prophecy of Joel arises out of a great devastation, brought on the land by locusts, and apparently repeated for several successive years (ii. 25). To the description of this devastation (i. 2–12) is attached the exhortation to the priests to clothe themselves in mourning and to fast, also to summon the people to a great penitential gathering in the temple, in order to call upon Yahweh there. The calamity is before the eyes of all, and the exhortation appeals to the obvious facts (i. 13–20). This gathering is to be held on Zion, for in these locusts the prophet sees the foreshadowing of the day of Yahweh, which is near at hand. They are Yahweh's host, the fulfillers of His will, which press unceasingly forwards (ii. 1–11). Therefore must the Jews return to Yahweh and offer a genuine penitence; the priests must prescribe a fast, and call a gathering to Zion, and there between the outer court and the altar call upon Yahweh. Perhaps Yahweh will have mercy and repent of the evil, for He is gracious and merciful, patient and of great goodness (ii. 12–17).

Yahweh allowed Himself to be entreated; the zeal for His people revived; the locusts were annihilated; Yahweh blessed the land again with fruitfulness, and so restored to the people what had been taken away in the foregoing years (ii. 18–27).

But this blessing in nature is only the prelude to greater things which will happen. After this Yahweh pours out

His Spirit on the whole people; signs in heaven and on earth announce the coming in of Yahweh's day; there is for all who know Him deliverance on Zion (ii. 28–32). Then Yahweh will gather all nations, and reckon with them for all the evil which they have done to His people, because they have scattered them among the nations and divided their land. Especially does the judgement touch Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia, because they have robbed the temple-treasures and sold the Jews to Greeks far away. But Yahweh leads the dispersed Jews back again, and gives these enemies into their hands, and the Jews will sell them as prisoners to a distant country (iii. 1–8). All nations shall arise for a great decisive battle, and turn the instruments of peaceful toil into arms; they shall all gather in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Yahweh shall bring down His heroes; the time of the harvest, that is of penalty, is come, for the evil of the nations is great. There is a great concourse of peoples in the valley of decision; sun, moon, and stars are darkened, and Yahweh makes His voice sound out of Zion, so that heaven and earth tremble. He is a refuge for His people, and they well know that He, Yahweh, is their God, who is throned on Zion. Strangers shall no more pass through the city (iii. 9–17). Yahweh blesses the land with rich fruitfulness, and even the thirsty land is watered. Egypt and Edom, on the other hand, are wasted, because they have done ill to the children of Judah. Yahweh takes vengeance on them for the innocent bloodshed, but Judah and Jerusalem abide for ever, and Yahweh dwells on Zion (iii. 18–21).

Of Joel and his time we know nothing but what is contained in his book. The heading of the book tells us that Joel was the son of Pethuel (*βαθούηλ* in LXX; Bethuel in Latin, Syriac, &c.). He lived and spoke in Jerusalem, at a period when the temple services were regularly maintained, when the Northern Kingdom did not come into the prophet's ken, and when the king of Judah demanded no mention; when Tyre, Sidon, and

Philistia, Edom and Egypt, were the national foes, and Assyria[1] and Babylon were beyond the horizon.

From the place which the book holds in the Hebrew Canon, between Hosea and Amos, the presumption was in favour of making Joel a contemporary, and if so, an older contemporary, of these prophets, and it was thought that Amos actually quoted him twice (Amos i. 2, Joel iii. 16; Amos ix. 13, Joel iii. 18). Credner[2] (1831) with great learning and ability defended this traditional date, and placed Joel in the early years of Joash, when the government was in the hands of the high priest Jehoiada (2 Kings xi. 4–21); and he explained the allusions to Philistines and Phoenicians by the statement in 2 Chron. xxi. 16, xxii. 1; the allusions to Edom by the revolt of Edom from Joram, 2 Kings viii. 20; and the allusion to Egypt by the campaign of Shishak a century before the time of Joash (1 Kings xiv. 25 f.); from that time to the end of the Hebrew monarchy Egypt was not the enemy of Judah. The allusion to the Valley of Jehoshaphat is explained by the victory gained by that king over Moab in the Vale of Beracah (2 Chron. xx. 26). But are these ingenious accommodations demanded simply because the little book stands between Hosea and Amos in the Hebrew Canon? Can the uncritical arrangement of the books in the volume of the Twelve Prophets weigh against even the slightest internal evidence of the writings themselves? How weak the appeal to arrangement is may be shown by the fact that in the first six of the Twelve Prophets, presumably pre-exilic, Obadiah and Jonah, exilic and post-exilic, are placed before the early prophet Micah. Laying aside the prejudice of tradition, and looking at the

[1] Assyria emerged on the prophetic horizon about 760 B.C., and the Babylonian Empire had fallen by 537 B.C. This, therefore, suggests that Joel is before the former or after the latter date.

[2] Followed by Hitzig, Bleek, Ewald, Delitzsch, Keil, and at first Kuenen.

book itself, we see at once that it exhibits less the moral attitude of Amos and Hosea, or that of Isaiah and Micah, than that of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Malachi, and even Daniel. Further, iii. 1, 2 distinctly refers to the Captivity and dispersion of Israel. That there is no Northern Kingdom mentioned argues that there was none in existence, especially as Israel seems to be now synonymous with Judah. That priests and elders are mentioned, but not a king, is best explained by the circumstances after the Exile. The regularity of the temple service, the one sanctuary at Jerusalem, and the importance attached to the daily sacrifices, bring us into the atmosphere of the Book of Daniel (Dan. viii. 11, xi. 31, xii. 11 ; also Neh. x. 33). Further, we have here no denunciations of idolatry, such as flowed from the lips of the earlier prophets, and even of Ezekiel. It is fair to assume that the idols are at last put away, as they were after the Captivity. And there is no attack on the social and moral offences of the time (i. 5, it will be seen, is hardly an exception), such as filled the ministry of Hosea, Amos, Micah and Isaiah. The repentance called for is formal rather than moral. And finally, ch. iii connects itself with the Apocalyptic of Zechariah, of Zephaniah (iii. 8), or the Book of Daniel rather than with the practical and ethical oracles of the earlier prophets[1].

The style is beautiful, smooth, and polished; Prof. Driver does not think that the phraseology points decisively to the later date, though it is in harmony with it. The following passages (see Commentary) suggest the later language : i. 2, 8, 9, 13, 18, ii. 8, 20, 22, 26, iii. 4, 6, 10, 11, 13. Prof. G. A. Smith remarks that the sound state of the text, in such extraordinary contrast with Hosea, is itself a reason for classifying it with post-exilic writings, Haggai, Malachi, and Jonah. And directly we boldly place the book at the end, and not at the beginning, of the

[1] e. g. contrast the call to fast in Joel with the depreciation of fasting in the earlier prophets, Jer. xiv. 12 ; cf. Isa. lviii. 6.

line of prophets, we become aware how curiously it echoes all of them, and even quotes from many of them, from Amos to Malachi. (In seventy-two verses there are twenty of these literary parallels.) The Commentary therefore, following the modern authorities, will assume that the date is post-exilic. Vatke was the first to propose the later date; after Hilgenfeld and Duhm his view gained ground, until now it commands the support of such names as Kuenen, A. B. Davidson, Driver, Cheyne, Wellhausen, Robertson Smith, Merx, Farrar, G. A. Smith, G. B. Gray, and Nowack.

On the whole we may fix the book between 444 B.C., the establishment of the Law under Ezra and Nehemiah, and 360 B.C., when the Persian government began to persecute the Jews.

A controversy has been long maintained whether the locust swarms are to be regarded as literal or figurative. Pusey, following the Fathers from Jerome, favoured the figurative interpretation, as he clung to the earlier date. Hilgenfeld, on the other hand, accepted the later date and yet admitted the figurative interpretation; he saw in the four kinds of locusts (i. 4) the campaigns of Cambyses, 525, Xerxes, 484, and those of Artaxerxes Ochus, 460 and 458, and therefore placed our book after this latest date.

But the modern interpreters as a rule take the locust swarms as literal, though the crux of the term, 'The Northerner' (ii. 20), remains as a stumbling-block; and all the strong expressions, such as comparing the ravages of the insects to flame and fire, are referred to the boldness of Oriental imagery.

The use made of the imagery of a locust swarm in our best-known work of Apocalyptic (Rev. ix. 3, seq.) suggests the view taken in the Commentary. The prophet had before his eyes a series of disastrous ravages, wrought by locusts, and he saw through the physical fact to spiritual realities behind and beyond. He touches the high-water mark of Apocalyptic prophecy. In great images, and the moving

phantasmagoria of the world, he read the tremendous truths of the judgement of God, the repentance of men, the outpouring of the Spirit, the final triumph over the world. There is a deep spiritual connexion between the book and the N. T., and if its proper place is at the very end of the prophetic literature, where the Old looks out across the gulf, expectant of the New, we understand how divinely guided was Peter in seizing on the words of Joel to explain the great event of Pentecost (Acts ii. 16, 17).

Our study of this book should lead us to Christ and the baptism of the Spirit.

A few words are necessary about the locusts. The terror of such a plague has been frequently described, and after perusing some of the descriptions one feels that Joel's language is not too strong; and one can easily see how such a visitation, repeated for a few years, would force the mind of a prophet to think of the Day of the Lord, and would be in itself a strong call to repentance.

Prof. Driver (*Joel and Amos*, p. 90) has amplified Pusey's remarkable accounts of locust swarms, and Prof. G. A. Smith adds Prof. Bryce's vivid description of locusts in South Africa. These few facts should be remembered: the locusts fly in serried and orderly ranks like soldiers; 'when in an erect position their appearance at a little distance is like that of a well-armed horseman.' They advance in a cloud which rises twelve or eighteen feet from the ground. They blot out the sun and produce darkness. Their noise in flight is described as like the crackling of fire, or the hissing of thunder-rain. Their numbers are so prodigious that no attempts at destruction avail; over millions of dead, and ditches filled with the corpses, the unfailing host pours on. They devour all vegetation, and even the bark of the trees. They enter at the windows of houses, invading cities, and eat up all food, and even clothing, leathern bottles, &c., tearing what they do not consume.

Barrow, in his *South Africa* (p. 257), describes an area of sixteen or eighteen hundred square miles covered with locusts. And Doughty (*Arabia Deserta*, p. 307) mentions a fact which some think explains i. 4: 'There hopped before our feet a minute brood of second locusts, of a leaden colour, with budding wings like the Spring leaves, and born of those gay swarms which a few weeks before had passed over and despoiled the desert. After forty days these also would fly as a pestilence, yet more hungry than the former, and fill the atmosphere.' This second brood, called by the Arabs *'Am'dau*, 'pillars,' flew over the travellers for some days, invaded the booths, and in their fierce hunger even bit the shins of men (p. 335).

Possibly the swarms in Joel's day were accompanied by a drought (i. 17), and followed by forest fires which burnt up the stripped trunks of the trees (i. 19). There may even have been earthquake and storm at the same time (ii. 10). But it is evident that a visitation of this kind might preach to a prophet's heart with overwhelming force. And though the Day of the Lord will contain judgements more searching than any physical plague, a physical plague so destructive, so softly irresistible, repeated for a few years running, might and would suggest that great and dreadful day. The invasion of our own world since 1890 by a mysterious disease which we call Influenza, baffling doctors, and reducing the strength of nations, might well be a reminder of the Day of Yahweh, and a call to repentance.

JOEL

THE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of 1
Pethuel.

Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants 2
of the land. Hath this been in your days, or in the
days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and 3
let your children *tell* their children, and their children
another generation. That which the palmerworm hath 4
left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust
hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which
the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpiller eaten.

It will be noted that at ii. 18 there is a certain break in the book. Chs. i—ii. 17 is a description of the locust plague, and a summons to repentance. Ch. ii. 18–27 is Yahweh's gracious response to the penitence. Then ii. 28–32, which in the Hebrew forms ch. iii, and ch. iii, which in the Hebrew is ch. iv, are so distinct that Rothstein (in his translation of Driver's *O. T. Introduction*) assigns them, though inconclusively, to another writer. He thinks chs. i–ii are pre-exilic, and chs. iii–iv (Heb.) are post-exilic. But clearly the phrase 'it shall come to pass afterward' (ii. 28) indicates that the reader is carried far beyond the circumstances of the locust plague into an apocalyptic future of revelation, judgement, and Divine victory.

i. **1.** The name **Joel** signifies 'Yahweh is God,' and **Pethuel**, 'persuaded of God.'

2. old men: not the elders officially, but the aged whose memory goes back farthest, whose duty it is to transmit the lore of the past to the next generation. The form of the question (*ha*, followed by *ve-im*) belongs to later Hebrew.

3. Deut. iv. 9, vi. 6, 7, xi. 19 (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 59). The wonders of Divine deliverance and revelation were to be transmitted in this way. Now the same method of annalising must record this huge calamity of the locust plague.

4. This awful description is conveyed in twelve Hebrew words, which an idiomatic English cannot equally compress. But as it is

5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine; for it is

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the deeply significant text of the prophecy, it is worth putting down the formula :—

'Shearer's (*gazam*) remnant, Swarmer (*arbeh*) eats,
Swarmer's remnant, Lapper (*yalekh*) eats,
Lapper's remnant, Devourer (*chasil*) eats.'

The four words which have these literal meanings might describe four out of the eighty or ninety species of locusts enumerated in the East.

'Swarmer' (*arbeh*) is the common name for locust, referring to its incalculable numbers, which have been known, descending like snowflakes, actually to smother a human being. The other three names (cf. ii. 25) may refer to other species (*gazam*, *yalekh*, *chasil*). In Lev. xi. 22 are two other names, *chargal* (hopper), *sal'am* (devourer). But it is better to suppose that Joel uses the words descriptively, not meaning different species, but 'swarm upon swarm.' The four words rise to a certain climax, as the Hebrew root *chasal'* means to utterly destroy: Deut. xxviii. 38, *jach-selennu, ha-arbeh* 'the locust shall devour.' The word *chasil*, for locust, is found in 1 Kings viii. 37, Isa. xxxiii. 4, as well as here. Hence in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, Taanith iii. 66[d], 'Why is the locust called *chasil*? because it brings everything to an end.'

The idea that the names describe the locusts in different stages of their growth, completing what they had begun in the previous stage, is improbable. The locusts never return on their path, though, as Doughty observed, the young spring up in the wake of their parents, at first wingless, but in six weeks prepared for ravages even greater (Introd.). Well might Solomon pray against this plague: 1 Kings viii. 37, 38.

Pusey sees in the four names allusion to the four great invasions of Judah, the Assyrian, the Chaldean, the Macedonian, the Roman. The Fathers saw an allegory of the lusts; e. g. Gregory describes vainglory in the steps of lust, gluttony in the steps of vainglory, and anger in the steps of gluttony, ruining the soul, as the insects ruined the land. But both Pusey and the Fathers are not so much interpreting Joel as using him for a text to preach on. Quaint and interesting as this large and loose handling of Scripture is, we have no space for it, and must seek to learn only what Joel meant.

5. drunkards. This is not a special denunciation of drunkenness. It is only that the locust swarms have come just as the grape harvest was to be gathered. The drinkers will wake (Gen. ix. 24) to find that their cherished drink is not forthcoming. The 'must' (sweet wine) has failed because the vines have been stripped. For

cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up 6
upon my land, strong, and without number; his teeth
are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the jaw teeth of a
great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked 7
my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it
away; the branches thereof are made white. Lament 8

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the sweet wine, see iii. 18; Cant. viii. 2; Amos ix. 13; Isa. xlix. 26.

6. The swarm of locusts is not a family or a tribe only, but a nation! (Prov. xxx. 25). Their approach like an invading army is described still more graphically in ii. 4–11.

my land: not the prophet's (Nowack), but the Lord's (cf. Deut. xi. 12).

strong. The locust is terrible and irresistible by its incalculable numbers, which have been said to extend over 500 miles (Major Moor, quoted by Pusey) and darken the sun in their flight. But the little insect is also muscularly strong: 'Pressed down by the hand on the table, it has almost power to move the fingers' (*Clarke's Travels*, i. 438, quoted by Pusey).

jaw teeth of a great lion: i.e. the eyeteeth ('projectors,' Driver); better 'lioness.' The jaws of some species of locusts are toothed like a saw, and are very powerful; they can gnaw wood and leather as well as foliage.

7. He: rather the 'nation' of verse 6.

barked: the Hebrew word is only found here, though it may be connected with the word in Hos. x. 7 rendered as 'splinter.' It is quite true that locusts do eat the bark of the fig-tree and of the olive, but we cannot read that sense into the words here. Translate: 'my vine it has turned to waste, and my fig-tree to splinters.' This is hyperbolic; the locusts could not splinter the fig-trees, but they might reduce each fig-tree to the value of a mere splinter. Two quotations given by Pusey illustrate the verse: 'It is sufficient, if these terrible columns stop half an hour on a spot, for everything growing on it, vines, olive-trees, and corn, to be entirely destroyed. After they have passed nothing remains but the large branches and the roots, which being underground have escaped their voracity'; and 'They are particularly injurious to the palm-trees; these they strip of every leaf and green particle, the trees remaining like skeletons with bare branches.'

cast it away: 'strawed it' (Prof. G. A. Smith).

white. 'The country did not seem to be burnt,' says an observer of a locust visitation, quoted by Pusey, 'but to be much covered with snow, through the whiteness of the trees, and the dryness of the herbs.'

like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of
9 her youth. The meal offering and the drink offering
is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the
10 LORD'S ministers, mourn. The field is wasted, the land
mourneth; for the corn is wasted, the new wine is

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8. Lament, feminine singular, addressed doubtless to the land, or 'the daughter of My people,' to use the familiar prophetic expression for Jerusalem. The verb in Hebrew is only found here; it is Aramaic, and points to a late date.

husband of her youth: left a widow before she is married, the sorrow of which is well understood in the East, especially in India. This tender relation of the young betrothed is often referred to in the prophets: Isa. liv. 6; Jer. ii. 2, iii. 4; Mal. ii. 14.

Pusey goes far afield in the allegorizing of the passage. And yet it is always appropriate to think of the soul's desolation when bereft of its heavenly Bridegroom. Is there any desolation like unto that? Is there any mourning more appropriate? If all bereft of Him would clothe themselves in black, there might be a visual appeal to return unto Him.

9. The meal . . . and . . . drink offering (Num. xv. 5, xxviii. 7), standing with or for the daily sacrifice (Exod. xxix. 38). When the crops were eaten and the vine destroyed the meal and the wine were not available for the offering. In the later Judaism, to which we suppose Joel belongs, nothing was more dreaded than the suspension of the Thamid, or 'the continual symbol of gracious intercourse between Yahweh and His people, and the main office of religion' (Dan. viii. 11, xi. 31, xii. 11). Josephus felt this breach of the daily sacrifice to be the most terrible and unprecedented calamity in the siege of Jerusalem (*Antiq.* xiv. 16, 2; *Bell. Jud.* vi. 2, 1). Neh. x. 33 tells how this, which before the Exile was the charge of the king, became the charge of the people.

The older prophets did not attach this importance to the sacrifices, which, apart from moral obedience, they were disposed to contemn (Isa. i. 12; Hos. iv. 6, viii. 11; Amos v. 25). Joel clearly belongs to the time of the second temple.

The Hebrew word for **ministers,** says Nowack, is only in the later language employed in reference to the cultus.

10. The verse in Hebrew consists of five couplets of words, which sound like a dirge: 'Blasted the field; mourneth the land; blasted the corn; ashamed the wine; pineth the oil.' It tells why the offerings cannot come to the temple. Note the land 'mourns' as the priests do (verse 9). The wine is ashamed of its failure. The oil wastes as in a conscious consumption. It is very graphic.

dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ashamed, O ye 11
husbandmen, howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat
and for the barley; for the harvest of the field is
perished. The vine is withered, and the fig tree 12
languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also,
and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field are
withered: for joy is withered away from the sons of men.
Gird yourselves *with sackcloth*, and lament, ye priests; 13
howl, ye ministers of the altar; come, lie all night in
sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meal offering
and the drink offering is withholden from the house
of your God. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, 14

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languisheth: properly used of plants, cf. verse 12; Isa. xvi. 8, xxiv. 7; Nahum i. 4; but also of a town, Jer. xiv. 2; of a wife, 1 Sam. ii. 5; Jer. xv. 9; and of hopeless men, Isa. xix. 8; Hos. iv. 3.

11. Be ashamed: the cultivators, like the vine (verse 10), are to be ashamed. Joel's poetic spirit makes men and crops and fields mourn together. It is truer to the original to keep the one word 'ashamed' in the three verses; it was yielding to the prosaic spirit when the Revisers rendered the word 'dried up' in verse 10, and 'withered' in verse 12.

It is perhaps better, with Nowack, to read the verbs as perfects (marg.), 'the husbandmen are ashamed, the vinedressers howl.' Jerome says husbandmen and vinedressers are priests and preachers. But verse 13 ought to show us how untimely this allegorizing is here.

12. is withered: no, 'is ashamed'; and so at the end of the verse, twice. This frequent repetition of the word 'ashamed' is the proper sounding of the bell which calls to repentance in verse 13. When joy itself is ashamed, the time for penitence has come.

13 returns to verse 9. The priests are addressed on the same principle that the drunkards are in verse 5; by the failure of the crops their occupation is gone.

Gird yourselves: cf. verse 8 and Isa. xxxii. 11; in the later speech the word was used, without sackcloth, and in this reflexive sense for putting on mourning. Note the contrast of **my God** and **your God**. The prophet's God is He who calls for repentance; the priest's God is He who demands the drink offering and the meal offering.

14. solemn assembly: Isa. i. 13; Amos v. 21.

gather the old men *and* all the inhabitants of the land
unto the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto
15 the LORD. Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD
is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall
16 it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, *yea*,
17 joy and gladness from the house of our God? The
seeds rot under their clods; the garners are laid desolate,

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gather the old men. Wellhausen strikes out 'old men,' and makes the verb 'gather' reflexive. If we retain the text, as we are bound to do, 'old men' should be vocative. 'Gather, O elders, all the inhabitants of the land' (so Kuenen and Merx). Joel gives a special place to the old men, verse 2. The usual expression was 'call a fast.' The unexpected **sanctify** gives great solemnity to it.

This appeal to the priests is quite unlike the manner of the earlier prophets.

the house of . . . God, viz. the temple. In the older prophets there are always many sanctuaries in the land.

15 should be in inverted commas. The words are an echo of Isa. xiii. 6. It was perhaps an old cry, as old as prophecy. Man has his day and walks in his own way; but eventually Yahweh's day must come, and, in view of man's sin, Yahweh's day must be a time of vengeance. The closing words sound *Ukeshod mishshaddai yabo.* Prof. Driver renders the assonance 'as overpowering from the Overpowerer.'

Pusey says that the word 'Shaddai[1]' for God is always used with distinct reference to the Divine Power. It is used thirty-one times in the Book of Job.

16 returns to dwell on the hideous results of the locust scourge.

joy and gladness: which even in post-exilic times still gathered round the temple-worship, though its chief thought lay in burnt offering and sin offering.

17. A drought usually attends a locust plague: Amos vii. 1–4. This shrivels up the seeds in the soil. Prof. G. A. Smith suggests that the word translated **clods** may be connected with the corresponding Arabic, meaning 'shovels,' and translates 'hoes.' But

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[1] Dr. Radan, in *The Creation Story of Gen.* i, advances the hypothesis, approved by Prof. Sayce (*Expository Times*, xiv. 125), that Shaddai, a dual form, represents an Assryian *sadud*, the two mountains, so that El-Shaddai = En-Lil in Assyria, 'The God of the upper and lower mountain, i. e. heaven and earth.' But Assyriologists are men of large imagination.

the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.
How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are 18
perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the
flocks of sheep are made desolate. O LORD, to thee 19
do I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of
the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of

Rabbi Ezra and R. Kimchi gave the traditional meaning of 'clods,' which is much better.

barns: the word is cognate with that in Hag. ii. 19. Of course the buildings fall into decay when the use for them is gone.

withered. Keep the graphic force of the literal meaning, 'is ashamed.'

18. How do the beasts groan! I do not know why Wellhausen and Prof. G. A. Smith prefer the LXX here, 'what shall we put in them?' and read it with the previous verse. Nothing could be tamer than that. And nothing could be finer than 'how do the cattle sob!' participating in the sorrow of man. The verb 'groan' (sob) belongs to the later Hebrew, but if we are agreed that Joel is late, that is no objection. Prof. Driver gives his high authority for retaining the R. V.

Then the rest of the verse, showing the distress of the larger and of the lesser cattle, naturally follows. Wellhausen strangely says 'cattle do not sob!' For my part I was kept awake last summer several nights by the awful groans and sobs of a cow deprived of her calf.

perplexed: or rather, 'press themselves,' i. e. huddle together.

made desolate: nay, 'bear the guilt.' It is the lamentable function of these poor creatures to bear the guilt of man, whether on the smoking altar, or in the withered fields. It is the word in Hos. v. 15 translated 'acknowledge their offence' (also Hos. x. 2, xiv. 1). Nowack says 'the word is not suitable to flocks of sheep.' It is precisely the word which to poet and prophet, if not to commentator, would seem most suitable.

19. While the beasts sob and suffer, the human soul can cry to the Lord.

pastures, *lit.* seats or dwellings, may be either the folds or the fields where the flocks lie: e.g. Ps. xxiii. 2, lxv. 13.

wilderness: i. e. the uncultivated land, where the sheep are driven: Amos i. 2.

fire . . . flame. Perhaps we are to think of the heat and drought which accompany the locust plague. But it is possible that the locusts themselves are typified as fire, consuming the herbage. See Clarke's description of the *gryllus migratorius*: 'it

20 the field. Yea, the beasts of the field pant unto thee:
for the water brooks are dried up, and the fire hath
devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

2 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in
my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land
tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh
2 at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of
clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the

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has red legs, and its inferior wings have a lively red colour, which gives a bright fiery appearance to the animals when fluttering in the sun's rays' (i. 438).

20. Even the wild beasts share the distress, and pant unto God (cf. Ps. xlii. 1, 2).

water brooks, translated in LXX by *ἀφέσεις ὑδάτων* (so Lam. iii. 48), which Deissmann in his *Biblical Studies* shows was the technical term for the irrigation-ditches in Egypt in the time of the Ptolemies and the Romans.

ii. *The call to repentance.* The description even darkens as the plague increases. The locusts, having ravaged the fields, now enter the towns.

1. the trumpet: Exod. xix. 16; Lev. xxv. 9. As an announcement of danger, Jer. vi. 17; Ezek. xxxiii. 3; Hos. viii. 1. The priests are told to blow (i. 14, ii. 15).

tremble, the Hebrew word in 2 Sam. vii. 10, xix. 1. The community, after the Exile, all dwelt in or near to Jerusalem, and might be summoned by the trumpet. The summons is, of course, to acts of penitence, in face of the scourge.

2, as far as **thick darkness,** belongs to the preceding verse: cf. Ezek. xxxiv. 12; Zeph. i. 15. All observers agree that a great locust cloud is like an eclipse.

as the dawn spread upon the mountains begins the new verse. The locust host is compared to the dawn, either (1) because of its ruddy appearance (see note on i. 19), or, as Prof. G. A. Smith thinks, (2) taking 'spread' as 'dispersed' (Ezek. xvii. 21), because, as the dawn is crushed by masses of cloud and mist, through which yet the sunbeams pierce white and fugitive, so the great locust cloud, with the white gleams which often break through it, shuts out the day.

Wellhausen thinks the dawn suggests the east, from which quarter the locusts came. But this is far-fetched, as the locusts come from south-east. Evidently the apocalyptic imagination of the prophet is at work. And in the touch that the swarm was

mountains; a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth 3 before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and none hath escaped

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unprecedented we find ourselves carried to think of the spiritual calamities, of which the locusts are a symbol. Yet it is evident that Pusey's tendency to read it only as an allegory, and to see in a 'people great and strong' reference to an invading host of human enemies, destroys the imagery, and weakens the solemn terror of the passage.

3 shows how absolutely the prophet is thinking of the locusts alone, though with the magnifying eyes of the prophetic imagination.

A fire devoureth. Pusey with his wide learning is able to quote seven or eight travellers who describe the country visited by locusts as presenting the appearance of having been scorched, or burnt up, or reduced to brown ash. And this the more inclines us to take i. 19 as referring only to the devastation of the locusts themselves.

garden of Eden: Ezek. xxxvi. 26–35. Only in these two passages is the Eden of Genesis referred to. It seems evident from this and many other passages that Joel knew Ezekiel.

desolate wilderness: iii. 19; Jer. xii. 10.

none hath should be 'nothing hath' (as A. V.). If 'no man' is read, and that is a frequent meaning of the Hebrew word, it can be justified as a hyperbolic statement of the famine, starvation, and deaths which often follow a great locust plague.

Pusey's quotation from Alvarez (c. 33) is an exact commentary on this awe-inspiring verse. The mass of his confirmatory quotations is amazing. 'We travelled five days through lands wholly despoiled; and for the canes of maize, as large as the largest canes used to prop vines, it cannot be said how they were broken and trampled, as if asses had trampled them (cf. ch. i. 7); and all this from the locusts. The wheat, barley, maize, were as if they had never been sown; the trees without a single leaf; the tender wood all eaten; there was no memory of herb of any sort. If we had not been advised to take mules, laden with barley and provisions for ourselves, we should have perished of hunger, we and our mules. This land was all covered with locusts without wings, and they said that they were the seed of those who had all gone, who had destroyed the land.'

4 them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of
5 horses; and as horsemen, so do they run. Like the
noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they
leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the
6 stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. At their
presence the peoples are in anguish: all faces are waxed

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4. horsemen: no, 'war-horses' (Hab. i. 8). The resemblance of the locust to a horse has often been observed, and Volney notices that at a little distance it looks like a well-armed horseman (Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 90). The Arab saying is interesting, for it illustrates the whole passage: 'In the locust is the face of a horse, the eyes of an elephant, the neck of a bull, the horns of a deer, the chest of a lion, the belly of a scorpion, the wings of an eagle, the thighs of a camel, the feet of an ostrich, the tail of a serpent' (Pusey).

5. The amazing noise of the locusts is heard six miles off; it is compared to a cataract, a torrent, a rushing wind, a raging flame. It is Joel's own image to liken it to the rattle of war-chariots. This comparison, however, forbids the allegorizing interpretation; he means locusts, and not an army of men and chariots, or he would not compare them to these. If he were describing an army under the image of locusts, it would be pointless to say that the locusts were like horses and chariots. Rev. ix. 7-9 enlarges this description.

6. in anguish: Mic. iv. 9. The terror of the people when a swarm impends has been often described. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* xi. 35) says: 'They overshadow the sun; the nations looking up with anxiety lest they should cover their lands. For their strength suffices, and as if it were too little to have passed seas, they traverse immense tracts and overspread them with a cloud, fatal to the harvest.' (Pusey, who gives many other authorities.)

waxed pale: Nahum ii. 10. The phrase is difficult, *lit.* 'have gathered together redness.' We can only get the appropriate meaning, either by taking 'redness' as lividness or blackness, which is very forced (Prof. G. A. Smith), or by making 'gather together' mean 'withdraw' (Gesenius), which Pusey says is impossible[1]. Sometimes the easy rendering of the English rests on a quaking bog of uncertainty in the original.

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[1] Keil favours this view. To gather into oneself, when applied to the healthy glow on the cheek, is equivalent to withdrawing it. Fear and anguish cause the blood to fly from the face inwards.

pale. They run like mighty men; they climb the wall 7
like men of war; and they march every one on his ways,
and they break not their ranks. Neither doth one 8
thrust another; they march every one in his path: and
they burst through the weapons, and break not off *their*
course. They leap upon the city; they run upon the 9
wall; they climb up into the houses; they enter in at
the windows like a thief. The earth quaketh before 10

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7. Nothing is more terrible than the marshalled order of the locusts. They act under a common impulse. None leaves the ranks. They remain, as Jerome says, like the minute pieces of mosaic placed in the pavement by the artist's hand. Nothing short of infinite wisdom and power could make this terrible insect-host. They swarm over walls and enter houses. All act together, yet each pursues his own devastating way.

break not their ranks: *lit.* 'change not their caravans,' each squadron remains compact, like the regiments in an army. Wellhausen and Prof. G. A. Smith think it necessary to alter the Hebrew verb, to get the required sense. It involves only the change of the one Hebrew *t* into the other: cf. Mic. vii. 3.

8. path: highway. It is a stately description of the ordered host.

weapons: Heb. *shelach*, a late word (2 Chron. xxxii. 5; Neh. iii. 15, iv. 17; Job xxxiii. 18, xxxvi. 12). If we found musket mentioned in an old book, we should know it was not written in the days of the Conqueror; and so this word tells us that Joel is late in the Hebrew literature.

Weapons are useless against them because of their number; though millions are destroyed the rest march serenely on over their fallen comrades. Trenches filled with water to hinder them are quickly filled with drowned bodies and crossed; fires lighted to impede them are quenched by the ashes of the cremated.

Armies have literally been led out against the swarms; but in vain. The only hope of destroying them, as has been shown recently in Cyprus, is to get the eggs, which may be found in tons, and destroy them. Once the insects are born, man is powerless against the teeming host.

9. like a thief: i. e. the doors being shut they pour in at the unglazed windows. This image at least shows that the prophet is not thinking of an attacking army, but only of the actual locusts.

Yet it is impossible not to think of the same image used in the New Testament to describe the manner of our Lord's coming: Matt. xxiv. 43, 44; Luke xii. 39; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10. All

them; the heavens tremble: the sun and the moon are
11 darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining: and the
3 LORD uttereth his voice before his army; for his camp
is very great; for he is strong that executeth his word:
for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and
12 who can abide it? Yet even now, saith the LORD, turn
ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and
13 with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart,
and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your
God: for he is gracious and full of compassion, slow to

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the judgements of God, from a locust swarm to the last great day, have some elements in common.

10. A great storm accompanies, or follows, the locust invasion, and even an earthquake. This seems like a literal historical description of those years of calamity which moved Joel to prophesy (cf. iii. 15 for the apocalyptic interpretation of the phenomenon).

11. for . . . for . . . for are co-ordinate, not consecutive.

In the terrific storm the prophet hears Yahweh's voice; cf. 1 Sam. xii. 18; Ps. xviii. 14, xlvi. 8.

who can abide it? Jer. x. 10; Mal. iii. 2; Zeph. i. 14. Behind and beyond the locust ravages, and the earthquake and the storm, looms up the day of Yahweh (Amos v. 18), a camp more impregnable, a host more irresistible, a punishment great and terrible. Who can abide the day of His coming? The answer might seem to be, no one. But the prophet suddenly calls to repentance, as if even now the compassions of God would kindle. In spite of all these terrors and signs of coming judgement, men may turn.

12. Unlike the earlier prophets, Joel does not specify sins and demand that they be broken off. In place of penitence we have the day of penance. The **fasting, weeping,** and **mourning** ('mourning,' *lit.* beating on the breast, as Luke xviii. 13, xxiii. 48) belong also to the later religion; cf. Esther iv. 3.

turn ye unto me. The same phrase as Hos. xiv. 2 (q.v.).

13. Yet the penance must be heartfelt; and as against the mere ritual, Joel, like all true prophets, demands 'heart-sorrow and a clear life ensuing' (Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Ps. li. 19). Penitence is not an 'opus operatum,' a tearing of the garments; for this expression of grief see Lev. xiii. 45; Jer. xxxvi. 24; it is an inward sorrow, yearning, anguish, a tearing of the heart. The beautiful description of Yahweh is from Exod. xxxiv. 6 (cf. Num. xiv. 8; Ps. lxxxvi. 15, ciii. 8, cxlv. 8). The repenting of the evil is the phrase in Jonah iv. 2; cf. Gen. vi. 3, Hos. vi. 1, for the thought.

anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, 14
and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering
and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn 15
assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, 16
assemble the old men, gather the children, and those
that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his
chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the 17
priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the
porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people,
O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that

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14 opens with the words found in Jonah iii. 9, a phrase also found in 2 Sam. xii. 22; Eccles. ii. 19.

turn, the same word used of Yahweh as of the penitents (verse 12). He is not a man that He should repent; He cannot turn or be converted like a man. And yet He has His own Divine ways of both repenting and turning. The prophets still linger in the twilight with regard to the All Holy and unchangeable One.

a blessing: viz. a new harvest, which will make meal and drink offerings again possible.

15. The **assembly,** called first in terror, i. 14, ii. 1, is summoned now in hope of the Divine compassion.

16. Here the grammatical difficulty of i. 14 does not occur. All sorts and ages of the people are to be summoned to this great and expectant act of penance. Even the bride and bridegroom, to whom a year's exemption from public duty was allowed (Deut. xxiv. 5), are included. For this general assembly of men, women, and children cf. 2 Chron. xx. 1–4, 13, and Judith iv. 9–13.

her closet: rather, canopy or pavilion, the bridal tent (Prof. G. A. Smith).

17. between the porch and the altar was the inner part of the court of the priests; cf. Ezek. viii. 16. Here Zechariah was standing when he was martyred, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20; Matt. xxiii. 35.

The idea of the priests praying for the people is unusual in the O. T.; it belongs only to the later religion; Mal. i. 9; 1 Macc. vii. 36–8 (see article *Prayer* in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*).

Pusey quaintly says 'a form of prayer is provided for them.' Priests usually require it.

Spare: cf. Neh. xiii. 22. In the older language it was always

the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?

18 Then was the LORD jealous for his land, and had pity
19 on his people. And the LORD answered and said unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no
20 more make you a reproach among the nations: but I will remove far off from you the northern *army*, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, his forepart into the eastern sea, and his hinder part into the western

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'the eye spares': since Jeremiah it occurs with other subjects as here; Jer. xiii. 14, xxi. 7; Ezek. xxiv. 14.

rule over them: rather, 'should make a proverb of them.' In spite of Pusey's abrupt refusal to accept the meaning of *mashal* given in the margin, Wellhausen, Nowack, and Prof. G. A. Smith all prefer it. (So Jer. xxiv. 9; Ezek. xii. 23, xviii. 2, 3.) The question is practically settled by verse 19, where it is not the domination, but the scorn of the heathen, that the Lord, in answer to the prayer, promises to avert.

Where is their God? This was the reproach which the later Jews dreaded most of all; Ps. xlii. 3, 10, lxxix. 10, cxv. 2. But it occurs also in Mic. vii. 10.

18–27. Here occurs the peripeteia of the book. Hitherto it has been a description of the calamity, and an eager call to repentance. Now—the fast day has doubtless been held—we are told how Yahweh intervened, heard, forgave, and opened up a wonderful prospect of judgement and deliverance.

The R. V. does a great service by marking this, and by putting the verbs in verses 18 and 19 into the past. For the first time to the English reader the situation is made plain.

19. his people. As the people have repented, Yahweh makes His promise to them, not to the prophet or to the priests. In place of dearth and reproach He promises plenty (cf. i. 10–12) and honour (cf. ii. 17).

20. the northern army: rather, 'the Northerner'; the terrible locusts are to be removed, scattered into the Desert, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean.

But why is the locust called the Northerner, when it comes to Palestine from the south-east? The simplest answer is that the prophet forgets for a moment the locust swarm, and thinks of the evil which it typified, viz. the invasion of the land from the

sea; and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, 21

North, Assyria and Babylon; he had in mind the language of Jer. i. 14; Ezek. xxxviii. 6, 15[1].

hinder part: a word belonging to the later speech (2 Chron. xx. 16; Eccles. iii. 11, vii. 2, xii. 13; Dan. iv. 8, 29, vi. 26, vii. 26, 28), translated 'end' or 'last.'

ill savour also is a later word, found in the Targums. Nowack thinks this clause is a gloss; Prof. Driver and Prof. G. A. Smith think **his stink shall come up** is the gloss.

hath done great things. The subject is the Northerner; but that locust army was the instrument of Yahweh. The great things, terrible and repulsive as they were, have turned the people to repentance. The stink of the dead locusts is often referred to as intolerable and the cause of plagues. Augustine quotes Julius Obsequens, to show how a vast cloud of locusts, cast into the African sea, were rolled up putrid on the shore, and a plague broke out which carried off 800,000 persons. Barrow mentions the dead locusts cast up by the sea making a bank of three or four feet high and fifty miles long. Pusey's quotations are again wonderful and convincing.

21. Note how the land, the beasts, and the men, all the sufferers of ch. i, are now called to throw off their fear and to rejoice.

[1] This phrase 'the Northerner' is the crux of the book, and I cannot say the solution offered seems satisfactory. But it is the best available, and is adopted by Wellhausen, Kuenen, and Nowack.

Pusey objects that the locust cloud would not be dispersed in various directions, east and west, because the swarm always goes straight on. But as the plague lasted several years (verse 25), the several quarters may in succession have contributed to its destruction. And he quotes Jerome as mentioning that a locust swarm was carried 'into the Eastern sea and the utmost sea,' but he thinks Jerome quotes this passage of Joel rather than records a fact of observation. Besides the swarm may have covered the country east of the Dead Sea as well as west, and so part would be driven into the one sea, and part into the other. Pusey's account of Alvarez praying for deliverance from the locusts and receiving the answer in a great storm which destroyed the insects, and filled the rivers and piled the banks with the corpses, is magnificent.

König, placing the prophecy of Joel in Josiah's reign (Jer. xiv. 2–6), justifies the phrase 'the Northerner' from Jeremiah. But this can be justified without following König's date.

We have to rest content with a lame explanation. Hitzig's ingenious proposal to translate the Heb. *Hazzephoni* by *ho typhonicos* (Acts xxvii. 14), the Typhoon, only shows to what straits interpreters are driven.

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O land, be glad and rejoice; for the LORD hath done
22 great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for
the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree
beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their
23 strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice
in the LORD your God: for he giveth you the former
rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for
you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the
24 first *month*. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and
25 the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will

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the LORD hath done great things: the contrast with the great things of the Northerner, verse 20. It is in the past tense, because the prophet already stands at the point where deliverance is accomplished.

22. The harvests spring afresh. The Hebrew verb rendered 'spring' belongs to the later language.

23. the former rain in just measure: *Hammoreh lezidkhah*. There is no doubt that *moreh* in the last clause of the verse means 'former rain.' But the Targum, Vulgate, Jewish writers, and later Keil, Pusey, Merx, translate the phrase in the first part of the verse 'Instructor in Righteousness.' The Rabbis referred it to Messiah, and so does Pusey with great confidence. The word means 'instructor'; 2 Kings xvii. 28; 2 Chron. xv. 3; Isa. ix. 15, xxx. 20; Hab. ii. 18; cf. Judges vii. 1, name of a place. Orelli thinks the instructor in righteousness is Joel himself, and Kuenen points out how the name Joel is identical with Elijah (Mal. iii. 1). But this introduction of an alien idea, and the use of the same word in two meanings close together, must decide against the tempting suggestion of Rabbis ancient and modern, and we must read 'the former rain for righteousness'; i. e. either, 'in just measure,' or, 'to declare the justification of the people' (so Davidson, *Expositor*, 1888, p. 203 *n.*).

former rain and the latter rain: i. e. the October and April rains, so absolutely necessary for the fertility of the land in Palestine.

in the first month: 'month' is obviously a wrong suggestion of our translators. The former and latter rains could not come in one month; it would apply only to the latter rain which comes in *Nisan* (April). We must adopt the margin 'at first,' or better still the LXX, 'as before' (Lev. xxvi. 4; Deut. xi. 14).

24 takes up verses 19 and 20.

restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpiller, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall 26
eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye 27
shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and there is none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out 28

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25 shows that the locusts swarm had come year after year. The change in the order of the locust names shows that no stress was to be laid in i. 4 on the succession of different kinds—they are rather to be taken as descriptive names; the locust is the Swarmer, the Lapper, the Devourer, the Shearer. Pusey has some fine thoughts on repentance and the restoration of the past. God sometimes does wondrously and restores even the physical ravages, and external losses, induced by our sins. But the promise can hardly be deduced from this passage, which is speaking only of Nature's recuperative power.

26. This is the counterpart of i. 9, 13. Men can be satisfied and not thankful; that is satiety. The true blessing of God is that which includes gratitude. Hence the poet asks for many gifts, 'and not the least a thankful heart, to taste those gifts with joy.'

praise: *hillel*, a word belonging to the later language.

my people shall never be ashamed. Wellhausen would strike this out because it is repeated in the next verse. No doubt a critic in a thousand years' time will strike out the 'Nevermore' of Poe's *Raven* after the first verse, as a needless repetition.

27. This comes from Isa. xlv. 5, 17.

Israel. As the whole circle of Joel's thought is confined to Judah, it is evident that this does not refer to the Northern Kingdom. After the Exile that historic distinction was forgotten, and Israel stood again, as at the beginning, for the whole people.

28. In the Hebrew, verses 28–32 form a third chapter.

The word 'afterward' carries us far away from the locust plague, the repentance, and the restoration. That had been a symbol, a foreshadowing of great eschatological events, which are now unfolded. The close connexion between the first half of the Book, which seems all physical and material, and the second, which seems all spiritual and eternal, justifies us in thinking that earthly prosperity may be regarded as a sign and promise of

my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters

Divine blessing, and even invites Prof. G. A. Smith's interesting demonstration from history, that a certain state of wealth and comfort conditions a spiritual awakening; but the very word 'afterward' reminds us that the prophet had not this connexion in his mind. He has been wrought upon by the religious experience of the locust plague; and the prophetic imagination, warmed by the disaster, the repentance and the pardon, takes a wider range, dips into the future, and under the form of a spiritual revival in Israel, and a deliverance from all outward foes, anticipates the great time, which received a first fulfilment on the Day of Pentecost, and will be finally fulfilled in the complete victory of Christ our Saviour. Prof. Thorold Rogers (quoted by Prof. G. A. Smith) regarded the opulence of Norfolk as the condition of Lollardy, the trading prosperity of the country as the foundation of Puritanism, and the improved wages of the workers as the condition of the Methodist revival; and this is an argument for seeking Social Reform as a preparation for the Gospel. But in a far deeper sense the visitations of God's Spirit are the cause rather than the outcome of material prosperity. And the connexion between the two should not be pressed in a passage like this where it is obviously not intended.

The parallel to this is found in Zech. xiii, which belongs to the same post-exilic period.

afterward. This is quite indefinite, not immediately after; the distance was fore-shortened to the prophet; Pentecost looked nearer than it was; and the hills of blessing, which even we have not yet reached, seemed in that evening light of prophecy already glowing on the horizon.

all flesh: not the animals, as Nowack says, but all mankind, which Nowack denies, on the weak plea that Joel is only thinking of Jews. If passages are required to show the universal meaning, cf. Gen. vi. 12, 13; Deut. v. 26; Job xii. 10, xxxiv. 14, 15; Ps. lxv. 2, cxlv. 21; Isa. xl. 5, 6, xlix. 26, lxvi. 16, 23, 24; Jer. xxv. 31, xxxii. 27, xlv. 5; Ezek. xx. 48, xxi. 4, 5; Zech. ii. 13. But no passage can be cited to show that 'all flesh' means only the Jews. Nowack says, that if the Gentiles had been meant, they would have been mentioned instead of the 'servants and handmaids,' and he also points to iii. 2, where the Gentiles are the subject of punishment, not spiritual baptism. But this cannot alter the 'all flesh,' and the objections of the commentator disappear when we remember that the prophecy is an inspired oracle and looks out to events and conditions which the prophet himself could not have understood. I wonder that Prof. G. A. Smith yields to the cramping rationalism of the commentator here.

shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants 29
and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in 30
the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun 31
shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come. And it 32

'Sons and daughters, young men and old,' in a word, all sorts and conditions of men. The function of the prophet will be superseded in the universal effusion of the Spirit. The real commentary on this is 1 John ii. 27.

29. The early church saw the fulfilment of this, for undoubtedly, as Celsus scornfully pointed out, the majority of the converts and of the ministers were of the meaner sort. And now the most eminent servants of Christ frequently spring from the humble classes, e. g. Livingstone, and Moffat, and Chalmers.

In Ezek. xxxix. 29, Zech. xii. 10, the Spirit is promised to Israel, the king's house, and the favoured dwellers in Jerusalem. But Joel goes further, and anticipates the grand universalism of the Book of Jonah. All flesh, all classes, both sexes. The Rabbis (*Moreh Nebochim*, ii. 32) said: 'Prophecy doth not reside except on one, wise and mighty and rich.' While the prophetic spirit was expected in the upper classes and in the chosen people, the hope of the world declined, but on that day of Pentecost God called the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak to vanquish the strong. Naturally the mind of the humble spokesman on that occasion recalled the marvellous forecast of Joel.

30. We must not suppose that Joel, any more than other writers of Apocalypse, saw distinctly the connexion between the images which he described. The gracious heavens opened, and he saw that great effusion of the Spirit. Then the clouds closed in and he saw the signs which made 'the day of Yahweh' a terror.

wonders in the heavens, *sc.* **pillars of smoke; in the earth,** *sc.* **blood and fire,** doubtless the ravages of war (Ezek. xxxviii. 22).

31. The darkening of the sun; cf. ii. 10, iii. 15; Exod. x. 21; Isa. xiii. 10, xxxiv. 4; Jer. iv. 23; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Amos viii. 9. The terror of an eclipse is the fittest symbol of that great and dreadful day, when heaven and earth will pass away. The moon becomes blood-red, as we often see it in the murky air of London.

the great and terrible day of the LORD: cf. ii. 1, 11; Mal. iv. 5. In antiquity these signs in Nature were identified

shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as the LORD hath said, and among the remnant those whom
3 the LORD doth call. For, behold, in those days, and in

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with the destinies of men. To us they are rather illustrations or allegories of spiritual experience. The Day of Judgement here predicted may come in the broad sunshine, or in a moonlit night; and nothing could more nullify the prophet's intention than to imply that we need not fear 'that day' until these physical signs occur.

32. whosoever shall call. This is the familiar way of describing the worshippers of Yahweh; cf. Gen. iv. 26, xii. 8, xiii. 4, xxi. 33, xxvi. 25. The splendid universalism of this promise draws even Pusey out of his narrow ecclesiasticism, and he is constrained to say: 'They are members of the *soul* of the Church, who, not being members of the visible Communion and society know not, that in not becoming members of it, they are rejecting the commands of Christ, to whom by faith and love in obedience they cleave. And *they*, being members of the body or visible Communion of the Church, are not members of the *soul* of the Church, who amid outward profession of the faith, do in heart or deeds deny Him whom in words they confess.' But it is a pity to have a conception of the orbit of truth which requires these ingenious epicycles to explain it. Where does Christ speak of the *soul*, the *body* of the Church? 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' It is a sorry result of nineteen centuries of the thought of the Church, to produce a theory which is narrower and less inclusive than a prophecy of Joel's.

those that escape: Heb. *Peleitah*, the very word used in ii. 3. From the locust horde there was 'nothing that escaped.' In the great day of the Lord there is a remnant—Who are they? They are in Mount Zion and Jerusalem (Heb. xii. 22); yes, but they are there because they 'called on the name of Yahweh,' and consequently or perhaps because (1 Cor. i. 2) 'Yahweh called them.' Joel was only thinking of the literal Zion, Jerusalem and Jew; but his language went farther than he knew. That 'remnant in Jerusalem' embraces all those who believe, or shall believe, from all nations and kindreds and tongues.

as the LORD hath said: perhaps in ii. 17.

iii. Here the range of the prophet's vision contracts. From the great visions of the outpoured Spirit, which to our eyes manifestly mean the coming of Christ and the founding of the Church,

that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, and will bring 2
them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will

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he returns to the national destinies of his people. It is true, the fulfilment of the prophecy in this chapter still lingers, and Paul (Rom. xi. 26) is our authority for expecting it in some unknown future; we might therefore defend the view of Nowack that 'in those days and in that time' refers to what has just preceded, and this judgement on the nations and deliverance of Jerusalem are to be connected with the final victory of the Christian Church. But we can handle the matter of the chapter more naturally, if, with Prof. G. A. Smith, we treat it as a separate oracle. It is idle to discuss whether it is from Joel himself, or what date would best suit it. Evidently Israel's fortunes were at a low ebb, and the people were scattered among the nations.

1. For. This seems to bind the chapter close to what has just preceded. But if this oracle is added to the book, the connecting particle might be inserted by an editor, or it might belong to another connexion.

in those days . . . when I shall bring again the captivity. The situation of chs. i–ii was post-exilic; the people were dwelling in their land and not in exile. If this phrase is to be taken literally we should have to suppose that ch. iii was written during the Exile. And that would certainly be the simplest and most natural explanation. But the phrase 'turning the captivity' became proverbial for 'restoring the fortunes of' the people (cf. Amos ix. 14), and it therefore does not allow us to fix confidently the date of the chapter. Supposing it to be written at the same period as chs. i–ii, viz. after the Exile, we must understand 'turning the captivity' to mean the realization of the Messianic hopes with which the returned exiles, in their poverty and weakness, filled their imaginations and comforted their hearts.

2. the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will plead: Heb. *Emek-Jehoshaphat, venishphatti.* The common root *shaphat* (judgement) explains the choice of the name. There was no valley of this name at the time; the prophet described a valley, presumably near Jerusalem, which he called the vale of 'Yahweh will judge, for I will enter into judgement with them.' In verse 14 the same valley is called Decision, which shows that the name is allegorical.

The valley of the Kedron (1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xxiii. 6, 12; 2 Chron. xxx. 14), between Jerusalem and Olivet, was called the valley of Jehoshaphat from this passage, and not vice versa. The tradition connecting the valley of the Kedron with this name can be traced no earlier than the time of Eusebius, in the fourth

plead with them there for my people and for my heritage
Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and
3 parted my land. And they have cast lots for my people:
and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for
4 wine, that they might drink. Yea, and what are ye to
me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the regions of Philistia?
will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense
me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence
5 upon your own head. Forasmuch as ye have taken my

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century. Of course the event in 2 Chron. xx. 11–26 may have haunted the prophet's mind; but that valley cannot be meant here; for it was, and is still (*Bereikut*), called the Valley of Blessing (*Berachah*).

my heritage: the people, not the land, ii. 17; Ps. xxxiii. 12; Mic. vii. 14. **Israel** equivalent here to Judah. Isa. xxviii. 21 and Zech. xiv. 4 illustrate the general idea. All rests on Ezek. xxxviii.

3. cast lots: Obad. 11 and Nahum iii. 10. The nations have used the girls and boys of the unhappy Jews as current coin to purchase the means of debauchery, harlots (unless we might with Oort read a word for 'food') and wine.

4. The nations peculiarly deserving of Yahweh's judgement are singled out. Not Assyria and Babylon, which, if Joel is the writer, have long ago perished, but the immediate neighbours of Israel at every period of its history—Phoenicia, Philistia, Edom, and Egypt (verse 19). The names therefore do not determine the period, but the reference to the Grecians brings us down to the Persian period, when Syrian slaves were sold into Ionia. We can hardly say that verse 17 points to the persecutions of Artaxerxes Ochus in 360. The absence of any reference to the Persian overlords is explained by the fact that before Artaxerxes Ochus they treated Jerusalem with justice and leniency.

what are ye to me: viz. 'that I should withhold punishment from you.' Tyre and Zidon and Philistia (the circles, *lit.* regions, of Philistia are the five petty lordships in Joshua xiii. 2) were the age-long adversaries of Israel, never really conquered: Joshua xix. 28, xiii. 6; Judges i. 31, iii. 3 (Zidon); Joshua xix. 29 (Tyre); Joshua xiii. 2, 3, xv. 45–7, xix. 43 (Philistia).

will ye render me a recompence? The phrase belongs to the later language (2 Chron. xx. 11); i. e. 'Is it any deed of mine ye are repaying? if ye think ye are paying me out by your ill deeds to my people, swiftly and surely will I bring the payment back on your heads.'

silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things; the children also of Judah 6
and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the sons of the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border: behold, I will stir them up out of the place 7
whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head; and I will sell your sons 8
and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the men of Sheba, to a nation far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

5, 6. The charge against Phoenicia and Philistia is that (1) they have plundered the temple and carried the sacred things into their palaces (the word includes both temples and palaces, Amos viii. 3; Isa. xiii. 22). This situation is hardly identical with 2 Chron. xxi. 16f.; we know too little of the times after Nehemiah to identify the details; and that (2) they have sold the people of Jerusalem as slaves to the Ionians. The word Ionian, imported into Hebrew, stands for Greek; Gen. x. 2[1]; 1 Chron. i. 5, 7; Isa. lxvi. 19; Ezek. xxvii. 13, 19; Dan. viii. 21, x. 20, xi. 2; Zech. ix. 13. It occurs in the inscriptions of Sargon II. Robertson Smith (*Encycl. Brit.* xiii. 705) showed how in the fifth century B. C. Syrian slaves were in request in Greece. Earlier the Edomites were the slave-dealers (Amos i. 6, 9). But in Ezek. the Phoenicians are named in this connexion, xxvii. 13. The Greeks here, observes Wellhausen, appear only as traders, but in Zech. ix. 13 as rulers. Strabo mentions (xiv. 5, 2) that as many as 10,000 slaves were sometimes sold in the market at Delos on a single day.

far from their border: the Greeks were evidently to Joel the remote horizon on the west.

7, 8. The punishment on the Phoenicians and Philistines: (1) the slaves they sold shall be brought back; (2) they shall furnish slaves to Judah, and their children shall be carried to the south-east, as they had carried the Jews to the north-west.

men of Sheba: the great trading race in Arabia Felix (Gen. x. 7). Ezek. xxvii. 22 mentions them trading with Tyre. Tyre had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar; Alexander the Great took it, and sold 13,000 into slavery (*Diod. Sic.* xvii. 46); Arrian says 30,000 (ii. 24). Sidon was taken by Artaxerxes Ochus

[1] Prof. G. A. Smith says (p. 381) that the name does not appear in Hebrew before the Exile. Of course he assumes that Gen. x is late.

9 Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war:
stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw
10 near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into
swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak
11 say, I am strong. Haste ye, and come, all ye nations
round about, and gather yourselves together: thither
12 cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the
nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of
Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations
13 round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is

(about 360 B. C.) and 40,000 perished in the flames (*Diod. Sic.* xvi. 45). A similar doom came on the Philistines; cf. Zeph. ii. 4–7.

9. This is a terrible irony. Yahweh invites the nations to come up to war with Him (cf. Isa. viii. 9, 10). Their defeat is sure.

this: viz. the proclamation of verse 10.

prepare war: rather 'sanctify,' i. e. by solemn offerings according to custom (1 Sam. vii. 8 f.; Jer. vi. 4). This deepens the irony. They seek to propitiate God for success in fighting against Him!

come up: the technical Hebrew word for going out to war.

10. plowshares into swords: the deliberate reversal of the beautiful promise for the peaceful Messianic reign of the older prophets, Isa. ii. 4; Mic. iv. 3.

spears: a word of the later language is used.

let the weak say: of course it is a vain boast.

11. Haste ye. The Hebrew word is *ἅπ. λεγ.* and its meaning is conjectural. LXX renders 'gather together.'

gather yourselves: in the Hebrew 'let them gather themselves' by a mistake.

thither, *sc.* into the valley of Jehoshaphat or Decision.

cause . . . to come down: a late Aramaic word is used.

mighty ones: *sc.* the heavenly hosts, Ps. ciii. 20.

12. bestir themselves: *lit.* 'awake'; as Pusey says, it seems to speak of the Last Day. Our Lord perhaps had the passage in His mind both in Matt. xxv. 31, 32, and in Matt. xiii. 30, 39. 'The valley of Yahweh who judges' is not a local but a spiritual description. And that great thought of the harvest of the world can in our mind hardly be dissociated from the Maker of the parable of the wheat and the tares.

13. Put ye in: addressed to Yahweh's mighty ones, verse 11.

ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, 14
multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and 15
the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And the LORD shall roar from Zion, and utter 16
his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be a refuge unto his people, and a strong hold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling 17
in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any

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The harvest-reaping and the grape-treading are natural images of judgement.

sickle: a word only here and in Jer. l. 16.

is ripe: the word in Hebrew usually means 'to cook.'

The meaning **tread ye** can be maintained from the Hebrew word, *radah.*

overflow: the word in ii. 24. There of plenty, here of judgement.

their wickedness: Gen. vi. 5.

14. multitudes. The repetition is the natural way of expressing untold numbers. The Hebrew word is equivalent in sound and meaning to 'hum,' and suggests the noise as well as the number of the assembled nations.

decision: Isa. x. 22, judgement.

15. This darkness, symbolical of judgement, as at the Crucifixion, might mean that before the great light of God the lesser lights withdraw, but it is more likely to mean the terror and confusion of the Divine wrath, ii. 10, 31; Isa. xiii. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24.

16. roar like a lion; cf. Amos iii. 8, so our Lord, Rev. v. 5. In the earth there is nothing more majestic than the mien, or more awe-inspiring than the roar of a lion. The half-verse is taken from Amos i. 2, whence also Jer. xxv. 30.

heavens and the earth shall shake: ii. 10.

refuge . . . and a strong hold, like Isa. iv. 6.

17. strangers. It had been surrendered to strangers during the Captivity. The promise that such a desecration shall not come again is frequent; Isa. lii. 1; Zech. ix. 8, xiv. 21; cf. Job xv. 19. If Joel wrote in or about the time of Artaxerxes Ochus, when the

18 more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

Persians were trampling Jerusalem, the promise would have a special meaning. Of the earthly Zion the promise has not been, and cannot well be, fulfilled. But this the more casts our thoughts on the heavenly Jerusalem, of which the promise is true; Rev. xxii. 15.

iii. 18–21. *The blessing which follows the judgement.* The prophet understood it literally; we are bound to interpret his words spiritually.

18. mountains . . . hills: this is from Amos ix. 13. A strong image for the vines terraced on the mountains and the herds pastured on the hills, yielding wine and milk. In Judah are no brooks; the word means rather, channels of the torrents; only in rainy seasons is there water.

fountain . . . of the house of the LORD: Zech. xiv. 8.

valley of Shittim: i. e. acacias, is the valley of Shittim across Jordan where Israel encamped (Num. xxxiii. 49); Ezekiel, in the passage from which the image is taken (xlvii. 1 ff.), pictured the waters flowing eastward, as it were across Jordan. We are in a world of imagery here, and it is absurd to be geographical. Wellhausen's suggestion, therefore, of *Vadi al Sant* on the way to Askalon, as the vale of Shittim here meant, is unnecessary. Far more probable is Pusey's suggestion: the acacia is a desert tree, like a whitethorn in colour and leaves. Jerome says it only grew in the desert of Arabia. The valley of Shittim therefore is a dry and thirsty place. The fountain in Jerusalem shall flow out to such wastes. Then the name had the advantage of recalling some of the most memorable scenes in history; Num. xxiii, xxiv. 17, xxv. 1, 7, 11, xxxiii. 49; Joshua ii. 1. That literal valley was seven and a half miles beyond the Dead Sea from Jerusalem; but even across those lifeless waters, and into that historic desert, should these living waters from Jerusalem reach.

The beautiful image was suggested by the fact that Zion had actual fountains of perennial water, artificially secured and replenished by wise ancient kings. These fresh streams poured out from the temple courts, filled the pool of Siloam, and made a verdant track down the vale of Kedron, and through the *Wady en Nar* ('valley of fire') into the Dead Sea. The natural fact was taken by the prophets, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Joel, and spiritualized.

It must be owned, however little Joel intended it, that the verse

Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate 19
wilderness, for the violence done to the children of
Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their
land. But Judah shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem 20
from generation to generation. And I will cleanse their 21

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is an exquisite image of the heavenly Jerusalem, and of the beatific vision which shall eternally refresh and quicken the people of God.

19. How little Joel saw that distant future is shown by the closing verses, which come back to the prosaic facts of the country and the time.

Egypt as the old oppressor, **Edom** as the constant thorn in the side of Israel that triumphed over and benefited by Israel's calamities. Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Lam. iv. 22; Ezek. xxv. 12, xxxv. 15, xxxvi. 5; Obad. 10–14: cf. Amos i. 11.

their land: *sc.* of the Idumeans and Egyptians. To what this shedding of innocent blood in Edom and Egypt refers we could only say if we knew the history of the land after the Exile, but that lies in the dark. Pusey has an exhaustive note on the ancient glories and fertility, and the modern degradation and misery, of Egypt. Certainly she, the most cultured land of antiquity, became a desolation. But another prophet forecasts its restoration. And under the British protectorate this ancient and interesting country is reviving. Edom, which shows now the traces of its ancient fertility and prosperity, became a desert (Mal. i. 3), and is now a desert beyond hope of recovery. Lying between the south end of the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aelana, it was on the main road between Egypt and Babylon. Petra, its capital, was the halting-place of the caravans. All the wealth of Arabia poured through it. Elath and Ezion-geber (Deut. ii. 8) belonged to the region. Even in Roman times a great road was run from Jerusalem to Petra. But the desolation is now complete and apparently final.

20. Judah: evidently here the land. Wonderful to say, neither Roman nor Turk has reduced the little country of Judah to a desolation. In our own day the Zionists propose to restore its fertility, build its cities, and bring back its ancient glories.

21. I will cleanse. A difficulty lies here. The word applies to the person who is declared innocent, not to the blood. Merx would take it to be, 'I will declare the blood of Judah innocent,' i. e. no longer shall guilt be incurred by the shedding of blood in the good Messianic times. But the LXX reads the Hebrew word which means 'I will seek' (cf. 2 Kings ix. 7). This would mean 'I will avenge their blood.' Nowack accepts this change, proposed

blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

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by Wellhausen, but, contrary to Wellhausen, he does not change the second 'I have cleansed,' while he denies the imported relative 'that.' This gives a clear sense: 'And I will avenge their blood (mentioned verse 19); I will not cleanse (the Idumean and Egyptian murderers).'

For 'avenge their blood' see Rev. vi. 10, 11.

for the LORD dwelleth: in the Hebrew, 'and Yahweh dwelling in Zion.' Prof. G. A. Smith takes it as an oath, 'by Yahweh who dwelleth in Zion,' but that is hardly possible, as Yahweh is the speaker. The brief Hebrew expression rather gives to the 'I' the necessary interpretation, I am He that dwelleth in Zion. The name Yahweh means essentially 'I am,' and this explanation of His name is given in the same way and with the same intent as when it was given to Moses in Exod. vi, i. e. it is the pledge of deliverance. Why shall the splendid promise of verses 18–21 be fulfilled? Because Yahweh dwells in Zion. This promise is singularly like the glorious ending of Matthew's Gospel. There is no more beautiful contrast in Scripture than that between the terror and consternation with which Joel begins and the peace and triumph with which he ends. The little book passes from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City.

AMOS

INTRODUCTION

AND

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

AMOS

INTRODUCTION

THE book of Amos is the earliest prophetic writing which has come down to us. It is a pity that in our Canon it should follow Joel, which is probably the latest, and Hosea, a contemporary who developed the message and teaching of Amos. The book is compact, connected, and authentic. Some twenty-six verses have, on various grounds, been suspected as later insertions, but the bulk of the book is unquestioned as an autograph document from the middle of the eighth century B. C. It is therefore an invaluable starting-point for understanding the literature of the Old Testament—a fixed, historical fact shedding light on other writings which are less certain.

Who Amos was he tells us himself, i. 1, vii. 10–17, which is autobiographical. A herdsman and dresser of sycomores, born at Tekoa, seven miles south of Bethlehem in the Southern Kingdom (2 Sam. xiv. 2, xxiii. 26; 1 Chron. ii. 24, iv. 5; 2 Chron. xi. 6, xx. 20; Jer. vi. 1), entirely unconnected with the prophetic schools of the time, he was sent by the call of God to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Thus while he starts from Zion (i. 2) his ministry culminates at the rival shrine, the royal sanctuary, Beth-el (vii. 13). The date is fixed by i. 1, vii. 9, for Jeroboam II reigned between 782 and 743, a long and prosperous and victorious reign. If we knew the date of the earthquake in the reign of Uzziah, the contemporary king of Judah (Zech. xiv. 5), we could be more exact still. But we can get a few hints from other sources. In 765 B. C. the Assyrians for the second time invaded Hadrach, near Damascus, and their records mention a pestilence which broke out. In 763 B. C. occurred a total eclipse of the sun. It is reasonable to

think that the pestilence and the eclipse mentioned by Amos (viii. 9) may have been these. Again Tiglath-Pileser (the 'Pul' of 2 Kings xv. 19) besieged Arpad from 743 to 740 (cf. vii. 9), but between 754 and that date the Assyrian left the Western countries undisturbed. We may conjecture therefore that the time of ease in Zion, of prosperity, luxury, and moral corruption, which brought the reign of Jeroboam II to an end, the decade 753–743, was the period of Amos' activity.

Prof. G. A. Smith thinks that the three sections into which the book naturally falls, viz. chs. i–ii, iii–vi, vii–ix, run in a manner parallel to one another, and that in each section a certain process may be traced. For instance, in each section God is represented as first seeking to touch Israel by physical calamities, and then when that failed having recourse to political troubles (especially iv. 6–12). The chronological relation of the three sections may also be to some extent determined by this, that in section I there is no allusion to the earthquake mentioned in the Introduction (i. 1); in the second section it is referred to (iv. 11); in the third section two passages describe the coming judgement under the form of an earthquake. 'If then Amos began to prophesy two years before the earthquake, the bulk of his book was spoken, or at least written down, after the earthquake had left all Israel trembling' (p. 69). But as we do not know the year of the earthquake, this does not enable us, nor is it necessary, to fix the date more exactly in the decade we have mentioned.

At the end of Jeroboam's reign the Northern Kingdom was demoralized by the pride of victory, by wealth and by luxury (2 Kings xiv. 25). The king had defeated the Syrians of Damascus, who had been weakened by the incursions of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III, in 773–772 B.C. (i. 3, vi. 8, 13, viii. 6). What distinguishes Amos, therefore, is the burning ethical zeal of his denunciations of the vices and the oppression which prevailed in the king's court and among the self-satisfied nobles. It was

Amos' startling message, that Yahweh would visit the sins not only of the surrounding peoples, which Israel was well pleased to hear, but of Israel itself. The false notion that the covenant with Israel was independent of the moral obedience to the law of Yahweh was swept away. The thunder breaks over the head of the devoted nations (chs. i–ii. 4), and then it breaks with a still louder peal over Israel (ii. 6–16). 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* will I visit you'—that is the surprising revelation of the book; that constitutes its eternal value in the history of the kingdom of God.

Behind the message was a man, a life, 'one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit' (Cornill). A shepherd who tended a peculiar breed of desert sheep (he calls himself *nôḳêḏ*, and the Arabs still call these short-legged and deformed sheep with the fine hair *naḳad*), a herdsman (vii. 14), a dresser of the small fig-trees (called wrongly 'sycomores'), the poor and watery fruit of which was provoked to ripeness by pinching (the word 'dresser' means 'pincher'), Amos lived in the desert of Judea, which fell down in terraces and dreary slopes from the ridge of Tekoa, twelve miles south of Jerusalem to the level of the Dead Sea, eighteen miles distant, 4,000 feet below. Tekoa itself was, and is, for the name survives to-day (Tekûa), 2,788 feet above the sea, and the 'sycomore' does not grow at a greater altitude than 1,000 ft., but in the lower parts of the desert a shepherd might grow a few of the trees, which are the easiest grown of all fruit-bearing trees. It was in this same desert of scant vegetation, prowling beasts, and terrible outlook, but for the towers of Jerusalem dimly visible to the north, and the blue strip of the Dead Sea visible to the east, that John the Baptist was prepared for his mission (Luke i. 80), and our Lord kept his vigil of temptation (Mark i. 18). Perhaps to sell his wool Amos travelled to the Northern Kingdom, twelve miles to Jerusalem, ten more to Beth-el (vii. 10), seven more to Gilgal,

twenty more to Samaria, a two days' journey from Tekoa. Perhaps as a traveller he came into contact with the various sorts of men—Moabite, Aramean, Philistine, Phoenician—mentioned in his pages, and saw the things which he describes with such vivid touches, the slave trade, national mourning, the alarm of the Assyrian, the feasts, the revelries, the thieving priests, the covetous traders; and heard the viols, the songs, the preposterous music (vi. 1, 4-7). Gaining his vision and his imagery in the desert, he learnt to apply his message in the crowded, bustling, religious, godless ways of men. How significant, that the voice of Yahweh first comes to him as the roar of a desert lion (i. 2). That tremendous voice from Zion across the desert is the first call to prophecy (iii. 8). The book teems with reminders of the desert life and of the shepherd's experience. The word of Yahweh authenticates itself by this, that it comes not to the cultured students in the schools of the prophets, but to the labourer in the open air.

Amos is the realist among prophets, the man of the people who 'into politics brings facts, into religion vision' (Prof. G. A. Smith). He is like a modern socialist reformer. Indignant over the wrongs of the poor, he has no pity for the oppressor. The element of love is wanting. He hardly calls men to repentance; he is engaged in the denunciation of doom. Only in one brief vision at the end, which seems out of relation to the rest, the rigour relaxes, the voice softens, and the promise of restoration and blessing struggles up like a late winter dawn. Such is the remarkable figure with whom the written prophecy of Israel begins. This prophet did not derive his message from the law; though the Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx) was published, and the ethical basis of the national life therein expressed was by him presupposed. Nor did he, like a boulevard journalist, derive his message from the terrible political event of the day, the approach of the Assyrian power, though that event seemed clearly to

him to enforce the penalty which he denounced on the national sins.

His message came from his own conscience, moved and enlightened by the Spirit of God. He castigated the outrages of nobles, merchants, kings and priests, by the moral sense which was common to him and to all Israel. But in the clearness of his conviction God led him to enunciate two truths which the people of his time were ill prepared to receive, and these two truths constitute the originality of the prophetic message, and place Amos among the great teachers of religion in the history of the world. They were :—

1. National privilege carried with it no immunity from Divine punishment. Nay, the more surely a people is God's, the more surely will He chastise their sins.

2. The ceremonial of religion had no power to propitiate or to bind the Most High. God is righteousness; the two terms are identical (v. 6, 14). Apart from justice and righteousness, all the elaborate devices of religion would be of no avail (v. 21).

When one remembers how the later Judaism fell away from these clear principles, and how small a part even of Christendom has yet grasped them in any decisive way, we can have no difficulty in recognizing the striking place of Amos in the history of religion, or in admitting that the great truths came to him by revelation.

The book of Amos confirms the modern view of the composition of the Pentateuch. The prophet does not seem to know any elaborate ritual, and he even implies that sacrifices were unknown in the wilderness (v. 25 : so Jer. vii. 22). If this, the most obvious interpretation of his words, is correct, we must conclude that the Priestly Code and even the Deuteronomic Code, in the Pentateuch, were not yet promulgated. The contrast between Amos and Joel in this respect is startling. To Joel the feasts and assemblies of the Priestly Code are a matter of course; to Amos they are unknown, as authoritative practices, and

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are set over against the moral demands which Yahweh makes on His people.

To see Amos at his height of grandeur one must see him confronting alone the priest Amaziah, at some great assembly round the king's sanctuary of Beth-el (ch. vii). First we have the gist of his preaching in Israel, and then the scene on that great day when the official priest denounced the unofficial prophet, very much as the priests assailed our Lord in a later day. That is the climax, and the autobiographical passage gives a vivid historical reality to the book.

It remains to present a synopsis of the contents, that the reader may appreciate the unity of the whole and the relation of the parts.

Part i. Chs. i, ii. A series of judgements on the peoples of Syria and Palestine, each framed on the same plan, naming a special unpardonable fault for which punishment falls. The most decisive is the last on Israel itself; the least impressive is that on Judah which immediately precedes it.

Part ii. Chs. iii–vi. At first this section seems to consist of three discourses, beginning each with 'Hear ye this word,' and ending with a denunciation. But the connexion is so slight, the changes so rapid, that ten different passages may be marked; perhaps, however, they may be reduced to six, thus:—

1. Ch. iii. 1, 2. 'Hear this word,' the main theme of judgement; 3–8 a parenthesis on the prophet's right to threaten doom, then 9–15 follows on verse 2, threatening the invasion and overthrow of the land.
2. Ch. iv. 1–3. 'Hear this word.' Against women. The siege of the capital and captivity.
3. Ch. iv. 4–13. The vain ritual; the punishments of a physical kind, drought, blight, locusts, pestilence, earthquake; an approaching visitation more terrible still, of a political kind. 'Yahweh, God of Hosts, is His name.'

4. Ch. v. 1–17. 'Hear this word.' A dirge. The vain ritual; Yahweh's demand. A reprieve offered to repentance (verses 14, 15), without connexion, passes to a universal mourning (verses 16, 17).
5. Ch. v. 18–27. Opens with 'Woe,' closes like (3) with 'Yahweh, God of Hosts, is His name.' The Day of Judgement will be disastrous. Yahweh wants justice, not ritual. Captivity beyond Damascus.
6. Ch. vi. The second 'Woe.' Verses 3–6, a satire on the indifference of the rich. Verses 7–14, captivity must come to a nation so perverse. A *nation* (*sc.* Assyria) will oppress them from Hamath to the Arabah.

Part iii. A series of Visions, interspersed with a narrative and addresses.

1. Ch. vii. 1–3. Locusts, averted by the prayer of Amos.
2. Ch. vii. 4–6. Drought, also averted.
3. Ch. vii. 7–9. A plumb-line in Yahweh's hand shows that the national fabric must fall and Jeroboam's dynasty cease. Here comes the narrative: Amaziah the priest reports Amos to the king, and tries to silence the prophet, but Amos prevails (verses 10–17).
4. Ch. viii. 1–3. Vision of *ḳaïts* (i. e. summer fruit), which suggests *ḳets* (i. e. end, *sc.* of the nation).

There follows in viii. 4–6 another attack on the rich, and 7–14 a fresh announcement of physical calamity, with renewed condemnation of the worship.

5. Ch. ix. 1. The vision of Yahweh by the altar commanding to smite. Then follows the hopelessness of resistance, and a restatement of the equality of Israel in punishment.

At verse 8^{b} is the first sign of relenting. Captivity is not doom but discipline; the sinners only will die. And then, with a surprising want of connexion, follow two oracles of restoration and glory, such as abound in later prophecy (verses 11–15.)

If the above analysis shows that there is something to desire in the connexion of the pieces with one another[1], we must not attribute this to the shepherd-origin of Amos, or with Jerome, quote him, as one 'rude in speech but not in knowledge.' The literary form and finish of the book are very noticeable. 'His language, with three or four insignificant exceptions, is pure, his style classical and refined,' says Prof. Driver, who specially quotes the fine climax in iii. 3–8. Roughness and rusticity are absent from his work; and the flow of his sentences is in marked contrast with the abruptness of Hosea. When God calls a shepherd to be His messenger, He often makes the language as noble as Burns's or Cobbett's, besides retaining the richness of imagery and allusion which can only be found in the contact with an open and untrammeled nature (iii. 4, 8, v. 8, 16, 17, 19, ix. 9).

Prof. Robertson Smith (*Prophets of Israel*, p. 126) finely says: 'To associate inferior culture with the simplicity and poverty of pastoral life is totally to mistake the conditions of Eastern society. At the courts of the Caliphs and their Emirs the rude Arabs of the desert were wont to appear without any feeling of awkwardness, and to surprise the courtiers by the finish of their impromptu verses, the fluent eloquence of their oratory, and the range of subjects on which they could speak with knowledge and discrimination. . . . The prophecies of Amos are excellent writing because the prophet writes as he spoke, preserving all the effects of pointed and dramatic delivery, with that breath of lyrical fervour which lends a special charm to the highest Hebrew oratory' (ibid. p. 127).

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[1] Baumann, in his *Aufbau der Amosreden*, has recently attempted to show that our book is made up of ill-arranged fragments, *disjecta membra* of Amos' discourses, badly edited. He finds five groups of ideas; e. g. i. 2–8, 13–15, ii. 1–3, 6–11^{a}, 12, 11^{b}, 13, 14^{a}, 16^{a}, 14^{b}, 15, 16^{b}; and a second group, iii. 1–5, 6^{b}, 6^{a}, 8, iv. 1–3, viii. 4–8, 9^{a}, &c. He confirms his theory by metrical considerations.

AMOS

THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen 1
of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

And he said, The LORD shall roar from Zion, and 2

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i. The title (verse 1) shows by its form that it was added by an editor who looked back upon Amos and located him by an event which subsequently happened—the great earthquake (cf. Zech. xiv. 5).

1. herdmen: Heb. *Nokdim*, the shepherds of the dwarfed sheep with the fine wool, which is still called '*nakad*' by the Arabs. 'Viler than a *nakad*,' is an Arabian proverb of contempt. The king of Moab is called by this name (2 Kings iii. 4), and Jewish writers, who thought prophecy could only come to the great and rich, maintained that Amos was a 'sheep-master' in this regal sense; but his own modest disclaimer (vii. 14) is enough.

Tekoa (2 Sam. xiv. 2; 2 Chron. xx. 20), a town high perched on the bare ridge six miles south of Bethlehem (to-day Tekûa). From it the country falls down in desolate terraces to the level of the Dead Sea, glimpses of which are seen from it, with the mountains of Moab beyond. In the north the herdman of Tekoa could see, twelve miles away, the mountain (Olivet) near Jerusalem. The herdman's landscape was therefore the wilderness and Mount Zion—the earthly sources of his inspiration.

saw: *chazah*, the word specialized for prophetic seeing, Num. xxiv. 4, 16; Isa. xxx. 10; Ezek. xii. 27.

before the earthquake: for the notes of date see Introduction. What an earthquake could do in Palestine is clear from Josephus, *Ant.* xv. 5. 2. It was in the year of the battle of Actium, B.C. 31; 'ten thousand were buried under the ruined houses.' The earthquake in Uzziah's reign left an awful memory behind, Zech. xiv. 5.

2. The LORD shall roar from Zion: echoed in later prophets, Jer. xxv. 30; Joel iii. 16. Zion was to Amos the centre of religious authority, the dwelling-place of Yahweh; though his ministry was to the Northern Kingdom his inspiration was from his own.

utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

3 Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with

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roar: the image of a lion, iii. 8; Isa. xxxi. 4; Hos. xi. 10, xiii. 7, 8. It is the roar with which the lion springs upon his prey.

pastures of the shepherds: *sc.* his familiar sheep-runs in the desert of Judea. Joel i. 20, ii. 22 note.

the top of Carmel: i. e. the most fruitful and striking hill in the north. The two expressions therefore embrace the whole land. Carmel means the garden-land. It is a headland 1,200 feet high, south of the Bay of Acco or Acre. It is called 'The Carmel,' i. e. the rich garden-ground. Green to the top, covered with trees, 'there is not a flower,' says Vandevelde, quoted by Pusey, 'that I have seen in Galilee or on the plains along the coasts that I do not find here again on Carmel. It is still the same fragrant lovely mountain as of old'; cf. ix. 3; Isa. xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2; Mic. vii. 14; Nahum i. 4.

i. 3. *The thunder of Yahweh* (that is the meaning of His voice; cf. Exod. ix. 23, 28, 33, 34, xix. 16, xx. 18) *from Zion begins to break over the peoples, one after another, and first over the Aramean Kingdom at Damascus.* This was the most important of Israel's neighbours, and as the Northern one it stood in the line of that Assyrian conquest which was in the prophet's eye. Rimman-nirari III had conquered Mari of Damascus half a century earlier, and by the later incursions of Shalmaneser III, Damascus had been so weakened that Jeroboam had beaten the Syrians and extended his borders to Hamath (2 Kings xiv. 28). But all this was only the withholding, as it were, of the hand of God; for the multiplied transgressions—three, and four (Prov. xxx. 15, 16, 18, 19, 21–3, 29–31, for the expression)—a more terrible punishment is at last to fall—captivity to Kir.

I will not turn away. Punishment is so in the prophet's mind that he does not even express it (the word is the same as in Isa. xliii. 13, rendered 'let it').

Gilead: the border between Laban and Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 44); as the neighbour that was nearest, it suffered most from the Aramean aggression. The **threshing** is the metaphorical description of pitiless raids such as are described in 2 Kings viii. 12, xiii. 7, x. 32.

It is characteristic of Amos, ethically and theologically, that he

threshing instruments of iron: but I will send a fire into 4
the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of
Ben-hadad. And I will break the bar of Damascus, 5
and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and
him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden:
and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir,
saith the LORD.

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represents Yahweh as Man of all nations, and visiting the sins of each as He would those of Israel; and that the sin to be punished is simply the ordinary cruelty of a conqueror, such as elsewhere was held to be pleasing to the gods.

iron: perhaps basalt, called iron by the Arabs, with which they still make the teeth of threshing instruments which chop the straw into pieces.

4. Hazael and **Ben-hadad**, the two most oppressive kings of Aram (2 Kings x. 32, xiii. 3, 7) who had ravaged Israel, including Gilead.

The phrase **I will send a fire**, &c., is repeated by Hos. viii. 14; so Jer. xvii. 27, xxi. 14, xlix. 27, l. 32.

5. the bar: the breaking of the bar (cf. Deut. iii. 5; 1 Kings iv. 13) laid open the city to the enemy.

the valley of Aven, or 'Vanity,' Hos. iv. 15. LXX has 'On.' Prof. G. A. Smith identifies it with Baalbek ('valley' in this place is *Bikah*) in the Lebanon[1]. Wellhausen and Nowack doubt this.

house of Eden: the sceptre-holder seems to point to an independent prince. Nowack finds this Beth-Eden, in Bît-Adim, on the middle Euphrates, often mentioned by Assur-nazirbal and Shalmaneser II. The king of Damascus may have had a summer residence there, or perhaps it was a tributary state. Note that in 1 Kings xx. 1, 16 there are thirty-two tributary states of Damascus, and Shalmaneser II in his inscription mentions twelve Hittite kings in alliance with Ben-hadad. This, if correct, is a remarkable light shed on the Bible by Assyriology.

Kir: a place in the remote North, unidentified (Isa. xxii. 6), from which it seems the Arameans originally came; cf. ix. 7. (2 Kings xvi. 9 mentions this prophecy as fulfilled, but the LXX omits it, which suggests a later insertion.) Tiglath-pileser, in his annals 732 B.C., says that he captured Damascus.

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[1] This long and beautiful valley was, as Pusey abundantly shows, crowded with temples and all forms of licentious idolatry, 'valley of vanity.'

6 Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of
Gaza, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
thereof; because they carried away captive the whole
7 people, to deliver them up to Edom: but I will send
a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour the palaces
8 thereof: and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and
I will turn mine hand against Ekron, and the remnant
of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.
9 Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of
Tyre, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
thereof; because they delivered up the whole people to

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i. 6–8. *Now the thunder breaks over Philistia in the extreme South.*

6. Gaza: the most southerly of the great Philistine fortress cities, on the border of Egypt. As a great emporium on several trade-routes, it would be a centre of the slave-traffic. The charge against the Philistine city is that it 'carried away captive a whole people' (cf. Jer. xiii. 19), i. e. raided a district not in war, but, like the Arabs in Africa, as slave-dealers, and these victims they sold to Edom, which was on the route of slave-gangs to the south (Joel iii. 6, 8). A raid of this kind is mentioned in 2 Chron. xxi. 16.

7. Such a calamity to Gaza is mentioned Jer. xlvii. 1. The town cost Alexander the Great two months' siege.

8. Ashdod: thirty-five miles north of Gaza, afterwards Azotus, in 635 B. C. sustained the longest siege in history. Psammetichus king of Egypt besieged it for twenty-nine years (Herod. ii. 157). Its suffering is shown by Jeremiah's expression shortly after, 'remnant of Ashdod.' Both it and Ashkelon occur in the later wars, Maccabean and others.

Ekron: the town on the border of Judah. Gath, the fifth of the famous Philistine towns, is omitted, as Prof. G. A. Smith, in spite of Wellhausen, thinks, because it had been destroyed by Hazael (2 Kings xii. 17). It is referred to in vi. 2, but as destroyed.

remnant: *sc.* the last man. The fulfilment was long delayed. In the times of Nehemiah Ashdod still survived, Neh. iv. 7, xiii. 23.

the Lord GOD: *Adonai Yahweh,* Lord Yahweh: the title occurs twenty times in Amos. Frequent in Ezekiel: cf. Gen. xv. 2, 8; Joshua vii. 7.

9. *The thunder now passes over Tyre.*

delivered up, &c. The same charge as against Gaza; we

Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:
but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it shall 10
devour the palaces thereof.

Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of 11
Edom, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the
sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear
perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: but I will 12
send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the palaces
of Bozrah.

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have no clue to the events referred to. For Tyre taking part in the slave-traffic, see Ezek. xxvii. 13. The **brotherly covenant,** however, as Wellhausen observes, seems to refer to some outrage against Phoenicians and not against Israel. But Wellhausen evidently suspects that the passage is not part of the original. Prof. G. A. Smith mentions that in the next century, under Ezar-haddon (678–676 B. C.) and Assur-banipal, Tyre twice sided with Assyria in repressing her sister cities. Observe the concluding formula **saith the LORD** is omitted.

10. Tyre was burnt by the Assyrians under Sargon, and afterwards by Nebuchadnezzar. Alexander the Great captured it and sold 30,000 of its inhabitants into slavery. It is now a solitude, and has been since the capture by the Saracens in A. D. 1291.

i. 11, 12. *Now the thunder breaks over Edom.* Wellhausen thinks this is a later addition, made after the Exile, when the feeling against Edom was very bitter for rejoicing in the troubles of Israel his brother, Obad. 10. In Amos's time certainly one might have expected Edom to complain of Israel, rather than vice versa (see 2 Sam. viii. 13; 1 Kings xi. 16), and of Judah who prevailed against Edom (2 Kings xiv. 22; 2 Chron. xxvi. 2); Elath or Eloth, on the Red Sea, was in Edom: but cf. 2 Chron. xxviii. 17. But we can hardly reject the passage on these grounds. For fifty years (849 B. C. and onwards) at least Edom was independent of Judah; and it is quite possible that on some occasions he may have exhibited the implacable spirit mentioned here, as after the Exile.

did tear perpetually. Prof. Driver suggests a change in the Hebrew, 'and retained his anger,' as Ps. ciii. 9.

12. Vengeance had fallen on Edom already. Ramman-nirari III (812–783) compelled him to pay tribute to Assyria.

Teman: see Obad. 9. From Ezek. xxv. 13 it seems to have been the northern district of Edom. But it is used for

13 Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge
14 their border: but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day
15 of the whirlwind: and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

2 Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of

Edom, a part for the whole, Jer. xlix. 7; Hab. iii. 3: cf. Jer. xlix. 20; Gen. xxxvi. 34. Eliphaz was a Temanite, Job ii. 11, &c.

For this coupling of a country with a city cf. Isa. xxxiv. 6, lxiii. 1. It is possible that Bozrah was a city in Teman, Isa. xxxiv. 6; Jer. xlix. 13, 22; perhaps it is to be identified with El-Busaireh, thirty-five miles north of Petra, twenty miles south-east of the Dead Sea.

i. 13–15. *Now the thunder breaks over Ammon.* It seems as if the Ammonites from the south had combined with the Aramaeans from the north (i. 3) to enlarge their territory by a deliberate extermination of the Gileadites. Such atrocities still occur where the Turk rules: let us hope the word of the prophet applies also to him.

14. Rabbah: Deut. iii. 11, later Philadelphia, now 'Ammân, twenty-five miles north-east of the Dead Sea. The only Ammonite city mentioned in the O. T.

tempest . . . whirlwind: synonyms, Num. xxi. 14 (marg.), used metaphorically for the storm of war and siege.

15. their king: Heb. *Malcham*, is, when pointed *Milchom*, the name of the chief Ammonite god, 1 Kings xi. 5; Jer. xlviii. 7, xlix. 3. The LXX reads also 'and his priests.' Perhaps therefore the original was 'Milchom and his priests and princes.' This final punishment of Ammon was long deferred, as the post-exilic experience shows. But now vast ruins of flourishing cities mark the place where Israel's hated kinsman once reigned.

ii. 1–3. *The thunder now breaks over Moab.* It is very characteristic of Amos that the punishment falls on Moab, not for his endless inroads and devastations on Israel, but for a deed of impiety, not otherwise known, against a king of Edom, Israel's foe. Nothing could better show the ethical and theological impartiality of the prophetic word in Amos.

Moab, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime: but I will send a fire upon Moab, 2 and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet: and I will cut off the judge from the 3 midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of 4 Judah, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punish-

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In 2 Kings iii. 26 we have a case of Edom siding with Israel against Moab. And it is conceivable that the outrage on the Edomite king's bones occurred then (2 Kings xxiii. 16). The *nephesh*, or soul, was in the primitive Semitic faith so identified with the body that to burn the one was to destroy the other.

2. Kerioth: *lit.* 'cities'; the capital was perhaps composed of several absorbed towns like London. Jer. xlviii. 24, 41; Mesa's Inscription 10 (2 Kings iii. 4). Dr. Löwy's attempt to show that the stone is a forgery has not received the sanction of scholars.

with tumult: Jer. xlviii. 45 calls the Moabites 'sons of tumult.'

trumpet: *shophar*, a curved horn of a cow or ram, to be distinguished from the straight metal trumpet (*hatzotzerah*). The two instruments are confused in our Bible, except where *shophar* and *hatzotzerah* occur together, as in Hos. v. 8, where the *shophar* is rendered 'trumpet.'

3. the judge: the ruler of Moab, 2 Kings xv. 5; perhaps the vassal of Jeroboam II.

thereof. Our R. V. ingeniously covers the difficulty of the feminine in the Heb. 'her midst,' 'her princes,' for Moab is masculine. Nowack corrects the text; Prof. G. A. Smith understands 'the land's.' Moab was destroyed in the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar.

Thus Amos has uttered Yahweh's judgement on the cruelties, slave-raids, exterminations, &c., which were always staining those Semitic tribes. And now the thunder draws nearer home and falls on Judah, not for these wild excesses of the heathen, but for neglect of the law; and on Israel, not for offences against other nations, but for vices and oppressions within his own borders.

ii. 4, 5. *The thunder over Judah.* Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten*, p. 119, first argued that this is an interpolation; Wellhausen agrees. Against these critics, and their subjective arguments, we

ment thereof; because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after the which their fathers
5 did walk: but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.
6 Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of

may set Robertson Smith and Kuenen. The only objection is that the charge against Judah is rather tame and general after the very pointed complaints against the other nations.

the law: not necessarily the Pentateuch, but possibly the more primitive code, the Book of the Covenant, Exod. xxi–xxiii; or more generally still, the 'direction' given by the priests as occasion arose: Lev. vi. 9; Jer. xviii. 18.

their lies: i. e. idols. Cf. 2 Kings xvii. 15; Jer. ii. 5.

5. a fire upon Judah: fulfilled in 586 B.C., when the Chaldeans took the city (2 Kings xxv. 9).

We may agree with Nowack that this insertion of the threat to Judah rather breaks the movement of the storm from the nations to Israel, and from a dramatic point of view it might be better excluded. But there is no showing that Amos himself, a man of Judah, did not purposely insert this germ of rebuke out of which much of the later denunciations of Judah grew. And for Amos of Tekoa never to mention Judah would be an anomaly demanding explanation.

ii. 6–16. *Now the thunder crashes over guilty Israel.*

6. The formula is the same for Israel as for the heathen, but the guilt of Israel is far greater, the sins viler, the ingratitude (verses 9–11) incomparable. The first crime is 'selling the righteous for silver.' This is not said of the judges (Driver, *Camb. Bible*), who are not mentioned, but of the people generally. Rich men sold into slavery poor, honest people whom they got into their hands. The law (Lev. xxv. 39; Deut. xv. 12) allowed a poor man to sell himself into slavery[1]. The second crime is that they 'sold the needy for a pair of shoes,' i. e., says Prof. G. A. Smith, 'for an old song' as we should say. But that is an inadequate interpretation, which would do well if it had been 'estimated at an old song,' but the selling shows that these covetous men would get what they could, as much, not as little. Mr. Box (*Expos. Times*, xii. 378) suggests that here and in viii. 6 the phrase is connected with the practice of selling land by the transfer of a shoe, Ruth iv. 7;

[1] On the other hand, the law did not allow the sale of an insolvent debtor, which is here contemplated (2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 5; Matt. xviii. 25).

Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes: that pant after 7
the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go unto the *same* maid, to profane my holy name:

Ps. vi. 10. He quotes the LXX of 1 Sam. xii. 3: 'Of whose hand have I received a bribe or a pair of shoes?' The shoe may therefore be regarded as the title-deed of the poor man's inheritance which the rich man has appropriated.

The best parallel to this is Isa. v. 8. It is the age-long oppression of the poor, whose poverty is their ruin; for money and property they are sacrificed and sold. Wellhausen and Nowack, however, think that the 'righteous' is to be taken in a juristic sense, and the selling is the perversion of justice for a bribe. Their authority, especially supported by Driver, is very weighty; but the interpretation above advocated yields a much clearer sense, and escapes the necessity of shifting from the unjust judge to the rapacious creditor in the two clauses of one sentence, which Prof. Driver's explanation requires.

7. The third crime is, according to our text, very obscure. **That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor.** This could only mean that the land-hunger is so great that they desire even the dust which rests on the poor man's head, perhaps sprinkled on it as a sign of mourning—a very extravagant mode of speech! But getting at the rendering which the LXX suggests, Prof. G. A. Smith gives us: 'who trample to the dust of the earth the head of the poor'; this is quite intelligible of the proud and callous rich. And on it the next clause follows naturally, 'and pervert the way of humble men' (cf. Job xxiv. 4; Prov. xvii. 23). The **meek** are the humble followers of Yahweh (Isa. xi. 4, xxix. 19, xxxii. 7). The fourth crime is unchastity, probably in the corrupted worship. The sacred prostitutes of the Phoenician worship are called *Kedeshoth* (fem.) and *Kedeshim* (masc.): Gen. xxxviii. 21–22; 1 Kings xiv. 24, xv. 12, xxii. 46; 2 Kings xxiii. 7; Hos. iv. 14. Deut. xxiii. 17 forbids the abominable practice. Such a prostitute, introduced into Yahweh-worship, offering herself, or himself, indiscriminately at the shrine, would lead to this abomination without the knowledge of the perpetrators. That the misguided act of worship is intended appears from the indignant words **to profane my holy name**, the **to** expressing not the intention, but the inevitable result; for the profanation of the Name see Lev. xviii. 21; xx. 3; Isa. xlviii. 11; Ezek. xx. 9, 14, xxxvi. 20–23.

8 and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon
clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God
9 they drink the wine of such as have been fined. Yet
destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was
like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the
oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots

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8. The fifth crime is keeping the garment of the poor as a pledge (cf. Exod. xxii. 25–27; Deut. xxiv. 12, 13). The large outer cloak (*salmah*) was, and is still, used in Arabia and Palestine as the defence by night as well as by day. With this the Arab is quite content: at night he can wrap himself up and sleep wherever he is, but without this he has lost not only clothes, but bed and sleep and shelter.

beside every altar (iii. 14, viii. 14; Hos. viii. 11, x. 1, 2, 8, xii. 11). The law of the one altar in Deuteronomy was not yet promulgated. But these lawless oppressors heaped the pledge garments to lie on in their religious feasts—such was their moral obfuscation!

the wine of such as have been fined. The fines exacted, perhaps in justice, from poor defaulters, are ill-used for the luxurious feasts, professedly religious, of the rich.

their God. They suppose it is Yahweh; but it is really a god of their own. When we worship God with iniquity, we cease to worship Him; we have made another god, and are bringing to our idol His proper service.

9–12. Now against these five crimes which polluted Israel the prophet sets the grace of Yahweh which chose, delivered, and settled Israel in his land. What brings Israel's sins out in such terrible relief is that Yahweh had dealt with him as He had with no other nation.

9. The ingratitude, that conduct so evil should repay the mighty acts of the grace of Yahweh. The Amorite stands for all the inhabitants of Canaan on both sides of Jordan, before the invasion of Israel (Gen. xlviii. 22; Deut. i. 20, 27; Joshua xxiv. 8; 1 Sam. vii. 14; 2 Sam. xxi. 2). Their legendary origin is given in Gen. x. 16.

height of the cedars. For the reputed size of the aborigines of Canaan see Num. xiii. 22, 32; Deut. i. 28, iii. 11; Joshua xii. 4, xiii. 12.

fruit from above. From the comparison with the cedars it is a natural image to think of the Amorite as a blasted tree: cf. Job xviii. 16; Isa. xxxvii. 31; Ezek. xvii. 9; Hos. ix. 16. The inscription on the tomb of Eshmunazar, king of Sidon: 'May he

from beneath. Also I brought you up out of the land 10
of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to
possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of 11
your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazi-
rites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith
the LORD. But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink; 12
and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

(who violates the tomb) have no root beneath or fruit above, or any beauty among the living under the sun.'

10. Was it for this life of luxury, oppression, and greed that Yahweh brought His people out of Egypt? (cf. v. 25). This argument of the Exodus rings through the law, Exod. xx. 2; Deut. v. 6, vi. 12: cf. Hos. xiii. 4.

forty years: Deut. ii. 7, viii. 2, xxix. 5.

11. Of all God's gifts the greatest is the inspired or the devout man. Note it is not Moses and the law that are referred to; from the standpoint of Amos the prophet precedes the law. The Nazirite, like the sons of Rechab, was a man pledged to abstinence from drink, who wore his hair long as a symbol of his dedication to Yahweh, and set an example of abstemiousness and simplicity in a luxurious age.

prophets: e. g. Samuel, Ahijah, 1 Kings xiv. 2, 4; Jehu, 1 Kings xvi. 1, 7, 12; Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 8, 18.

Nazirite: such apparently was Samuel at first (1 Sam. i. 11); Samson is the one certain historical instance (Judges xiii—xvi). As Num. vi. 1–21 shows, the word *nazir* means 'separated.' Lam. iv. 7 perhaps shows the good results of abstinence.

saith the LORD: *lit.* 'Yahweh's whisper, or oracle'; the common word for a revelation to a prophet.

It is striking, and perhaps an evidence that the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch was not yet known, that Amos does not mention the priest, but the Nazirite whose life of separation involved no priestly function, but was not less strict than that of the later priesthood. The best N. T. comment is Heb. xiii. 13.

12. gave ... drink. These apostles and examples of abstinence were in the age of luxury seduced into the common practices.

Prophesy not: cf. vii. 13; but he is thinking of Elijah persecuted by Ahab or Micaiah-ben-Imlah, 1 Kings xxii. 26, 27: see 2 Chron. xvi. 7, 10; Hos. vi. 5, ix. 7, 8. So our Lord gives this as the capital crime of the Jews, Matt. xxiii. 37.

It is a pertinent and impressive question: How far do these words (verses 6–12) describe our own condition in England and America, where the destruction of the poor is their poverty, and

13 Behold, I will press *you* in your place, as a cart presseth
14 that is full of sheaves. And flight shall perish from the
swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force,
15 neither shall the mighty deliver himself: neither shall
he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of

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the vast accumulations of thoughtless wealth leave or make the 'submerged tenth'; where God's messengers are constantly absorbed in the luxurious world, or silenced and disregarded by the polite scepticism which flourishes with luxury?

ii. 13. *A vision of immediate judgement.*

13. I will press. The uncertainty shown in the margin is due to the fact that the Hebrew word used here is not found elsewhere, and its meaning is conjectural. It seems, however, better to guess a meaning, than with Wellhausen, following Hitzig, to write another Hebrew word, especially as the meaning he gets is after all not very appropriate: (1) 'I make the earth shake under you, as a wagon shakes which is full of sheaves.' It is doubtful, says Wellhausen, whether wagons were used for the harvest in Palestine, but the image might be borrowed from another quarter; and Prof. G. A. Smith refers to 1 Sam. vi. 7 to show that they were used. (2) Our R. V. gives a tolerable meaning: under the shock of war the people will be crushed down as anything would be in the path of a laden wagon. But this leaves the translation of the Hebrew 'under you' by **in your place** very forced, though there is a parallel in the Hebrew of Job xxxvi. 16, xl. 12; also Judges vii. 21; Isa. xxv. 10. (3) The image that is wanted, though it can only be wrung out of the Hebrew words, is 'I will constrain you, as the wagon constrains the sheaves,' i. e. they shall be carried off to judgement in exile, as the sheaves of the harvest are carried away in the cart, to be ground and eaten. The margin follows the A. V., and Pusey agrees; but the rendering is not in keeping with the threats in the context. It refers to the familiar figure in the O. T. of Yahweh being pressed and burdened with the sins of His people (cf. Isa. xliii. 24; Mal. ii. 17). It is, however, doubtful whether the verb in the Hiphil, whatever the root might mean, could carry this passive or reflective sense.

14. The connexion of thought greatly favours the second interpretation. The pressure of Yahweh, fighting against His people, constitutes an irremediable doom.

flight: or 'refuge,' as in margin (cf. Job xi. 20; Ps. cxlii. 4; Jer. xxv. 35); the word is used of God in 2 Sam. xxii. 3; Ps. lix. 17; Jer. xvi. 19.

15, 16. This headlong flight and ruin show how the storm of

foot shall not deliver *himself*: neither shall he that rideth
the horse deliver himself: and he that is courageous 16
among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,
saith the LORD.

Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against 3
you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which
I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only 2
have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore

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vengeance which has rolled over the surrounding nations is most severe of all over Israel.

The forecast was fulfilled in the Assyrian invasion. Amos is the first prophet of the Assyrian period; but even Isaiah in his earlier prophecies abstained from mentioning the terrible name, Asshur.

saith the LORD: rather, 'the oracle of the Lord,' verse 11.

SECTION II.

iii—vi. The marks of these rather loosely connected oracles are the 'Hear this word' (iii. 1, iv. 1, v. 1) and the two 'Woes' (v. 18, vi. 1). It may conduce to clearness if we mark the paragraphs thus :—

(1) iii. 1, 2. *The theme and motto of all Amos's prophecies.*

(2) iii. 3–8. *The certainty of the prophecies, grounded on the prophet's inspiration.*

(3) iii. 9—iv. 3. *A threat of doom and exile.*

(4) iv. 4–13. *How the dealings of Yahweh have failed of their effect.*

(5) v. 1–17. *Another threat of doom and desolation.*

(6) v. 18—vi. 14. *Woes and threats of judgement and exile.*

See Introduction for another analysis.

1, 2. the whole family: this includes Judah, though Amos's mission was only to Israel. Jer. viii. 3; Mic. ii. 3 use family for a nation.

families of the earth: *lit.* 'ground' (Heb. *adamah*), as if to mark the lowly origin of these creatures whom Yahweh condescends to 'know' (Gen. xviii. 19; Hos. xiii. 5).

therefore I will visit. This is the amazing new note of prophecy. Israel's boast was that he was the favourite, the chosen, the only intimately known, of Yahweh. The prophet accepts the boast, and declares, 'therefore Yahweh will punish Israel for his iniquities,' the most guilty because the most favoured nation. It sounds terrible, but, though Amos does not say it, to be punished is a blessing; so only is the sinner warned and saved. Pusey compares the prayer of Augustine, 'Burn, cut here;

3 I will visit upon you all your iniquities. Shall two walk
4 together, except they have agreed? Will a lion roar in
the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry
5 out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird
fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is *set* for
him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have
6 taken nothing at all? Shall the trumpet be blown in a city,

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and spare for ever.' But this carries us far from Amos into the N. T., with its doctrine of the Father scourging the son whom He receiveth: cf. Jer. vii. 3–15.

visit upon: Exod. xx. 5; Jer. v. 9. 29. &c.

3. So revolutionary an announcement, striking at all the pride of the privileged people, demands some authentication of the prophet's office; and verses 3–8 give in a series of brief figures the ground on which he claims to be heard. An effect implies a cause; the prophet's utterance implies Yahweh's prompting. The images are drawn from the herdman's experiences in the life of the desert.

except they have agreed. In the desert, which is trackless, if two men are together it is because they have agreed to meet; otherwise they would no more go together than ships on the sea; so Yahweh and the prophet are met in this ominous task of prediction to Israel. This sense is assured by verse 7, though Nowack disallows it.

Will a lion roar....? In the silence of the desert the ominous roar of the lion shows that he has sprung on his prey, and the growl of satisfaction in the lair proves that something has been captured; so the voice of the prophet indicates the fell purpose of Yahweh, and the certainty of His carrying it out. Cf. i. 2 for this comparison of Yahweh with the king of beasts; it was perhaps in that terrific sound of nature that Amos first became conscious of the awful voice of God.

5. fall in a snare upon the earth. LXX omits 'a snare,' and that makes the words clearer. The **gin** is a net, which when the bird is immeshed is brought down. The 'snare,' on the other hand, is a trap which springs up and catches the bird which has unwarily touched the bait. The 'snare' has got into the first clause by an oversight. The point of the image is: as the captured bird proves that the snare was there, so the utterance of the prophet proves the designs, perhaps hidden, of Yahweh: the snap of the spring shows that something is taken, the voice of Yahweh will not fail of its effect.

6. trumpet: rather 'horn,' *shophar* (ii. 2), always the war-

and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and
the LORD hath not done it? Surely the Lord GOD will 7
do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants
the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? 8
the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces 9

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trumpet. The prophet's warning is as when the trumpet on the ridged city warned the people of an Arab raid (cf. Jer. vi. 1; Ezek. xxxiii. 3; Hos. v. 8; 1 Cor. xiv. 8).

evil: i. e. calamity. No evil of this kind can be, or be announced, without Yahweh's permission or command. And not only so, but

7. he revealeth his secret. Surely, rather 'for.' It is Yahweh's principle to announce the evil by His prophets, that the opportunity of repentance may be given.

Secret: Heb. *sōd* (Prov. xxv. 9), friendly conversation, Ps. lv. 14; so friendliness, Job xxix. 4; Ps. xxv. 14; Prov. iii. 32; and a council of friends, Job xix. 19; Jer. xv. 17. See especially Jer. xxiii. 18, 22.

8. who can but prophesy? Nowack, following Wellhausen, alters the word into 'be frightened,' in order to improve the parallelism. But that is unnecessary, as well as inadmissible. We need not press the parallelism of the two clauses. They stand each by itself. There are two thoughts: the roar of Yahweh must instil fear, and the voice of Yahweh must find expression in a prophet who hears and understands.

Thus it will be seen that Amos gives as his credentials in the last resort the strong conviction of his self-consciousness, just such credentials as our Lord offered when he said that the Father and he bore witness to him. That is all a prophet can do to authenticate his message; he lays bare his bosom and allows men to see the unalterable certainty, sure as Cause and Effect, that it is God in his soul, God speaking and acting within him, that produces the utterance. The images are drawn from the desert, because it was in that solitude and in presence of these facts that the conviction of Yahweh speaking to him had laid hold of him (see vii. 14, 15).

iii. 9 – iv. 3. This denunciation is directed not against the people as a whole, but against the capital, Samaria, the head and centre of luxury and oppression. The very heathen are summoned to testify if justice rules in Samaria.

9. in the palaces: rather, 'on,' that is, 'from,' the roofs.

Ashdod. LXX reads Assyria, which is a better parallel to Egypt, but Amos never mentions Assyria by name. Ashdod and

in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon
the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults
are therein, and what oppressions in the midst thereof.
10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who
11 store up violence and robbery in their palaces. There-
fore thus saith the Lord GOD: An adversary *there shall*
be, even round about the land: and he shall bring down
thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.
12 Thus saith the LORD: As the shepherd rescueth out

Egypt stand for the heathen enemies of Israel, who are summoned to see her shame (2 Sam. i. 20).

upon the mountains. Samaria stood on a hill 1,000 ft. high in a basin of high mountains, about five miles in diameter. The enemies from these surrounding heights were to look down on the shame in the city.

tumults: the restlessness of avarice and other passions, Prov. xv. 16; Ezek. xxii. 5.

10. they know not. The moral sense is gone. Their blindness is shown in this: they think they are storing up treasure, but it is only violence and robbery, the sure marks of an approaching Nemesis.

right (a rare word): 2 Sam. xv. 3; Isa. xxvi. 10, lix. 14.

11. The punishment is an enemy **round about the land**, i. e. blockading it on all sides, and the palaces filled by violence and robbery will be spoiled by the violent and robbers. This was spoken in 755. In 734 Tiglath-Pileser swept Gilead and Galilee; in 724 Shalmaneser overran Northern Israel. For three years the mount of Samaria was invested, and then it was taken. The palaces were overthrown, the rich and delicate were carried captive.

12. As the shepherd, &c. To illustrate the mere remnant which shall be left from the captivity of Samaria the herdman again draws on his desert experience, the sight of a lion which has devoured the sheep, all but two legs (*lit.* 'shin-bones') or even all but the ear-tip. It is vivid, and even grotesque, as we might expect from a rustic prophet. Exod. xxii. 13 shows the motive which the herdman might have for rescuing the remnant; it would show that the animal had been really devoured by a wild beast.

The Fathers allegorized this, as everything; e. g. Gregory says: 'The legs denote desire, whereby, as by certain steps, the soul approacheth to God, or departeth from Him. Yet, if a soul would be saved, desires suffice not, but if to these obedience to

of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed. Hear ye, and testify against the 13
house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts. For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of 14
Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el,

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the heavenly commands be added, it shall be rescued from the mouth of the lion.' This is, of course, not exegesis but homiletics.

that sit in Samaria, &c. This is a description, from the austere herdman's point of view, of the luxurious nobles of the capital. To dwell even in a house was luxury to one who knew only a desert-tent; to sit on a couch or a divan was effeminate to one who was accustomed to wrap himself in his cloak (*salmah*) and lie on the ground.

corner of a couch: i. e. the comfortable corner of the room where the two arms of the divan met.

on the silken cushions of a bed. The word 'silken cushions' in the Hebrew is 'in Damascus,' and the meaning of R. V. is only obtained forcibly by supposing some Damascene product to be meant (cf. our own 'damask,' and Arabic *dimshaq*). Our Revisers followed Gesenius, Hitzig, and Ewald.

It is curious that in Gen. xv. 2 this same word, *Demeshek*, occurs as an adjective, 'Dammesek Eliezer.' And though the parallel does not give us any meaning here, it justifies us in translating 'on a damask bed,' without knowing exactly what that means. Wellhausen and Nowack think the text corrupt.

13. Hear ye. The nobles of Philistia and Egypt are addressed (verse 9).

the Lord GOD, the God of hosts. This is He who is speaking through the herdman. Amos always uses this majestic designation (iv. 13, v. 14, 15, vi. 8, 14, ix. 5; so Hos. xii. 5). The hosts, says Wellhausen, are not the stars, nor the Israelites, but probably the world and all that is therein, perhaps especially the host of spirits. It is probable that Amos was the first to use the title which subsequent prophets adopted (Jer. v. 14, xv. 16, xxxv. 17, xxxviii. 17, xliv. 7). It equals the Omnipotent (Driver), *κύριος παντοκράτωρ* (LXX).

the altars of Beth-el. Nowack arbitrarily considers this clause an interpolation, because the threat is against Samaria and its palaces, not against Beth-el. But of course Beth-el, and Jeroboam's altar or altars, were to Samaria as Canterbury is to London The corrupt worship there was the head and front of

and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to
15 the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the
summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish,
and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.
4 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the
mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which
crush the needy, which say unto their lords, Bring,

Israel's offence. No lightning of God could fall on Samaria without glancing at Beth-el, the centre of the national religion and of its corruption.

horns of the altar. The first Jeroboam in raising his apostate altar had imitated the one in Jerusalem with the horns, or pillars a cubit high at the corners, for the sacrifice and the atoning (Exod. xxix. 12; Ps. cxviii. 27). A stele from Teima (South-East Edom) shows the horns of an altar curving like those of an ox. These symbols of redemption, the altars which were to save, should be the first things to fall in the visitation of God.

15. winter house ... summer house. The herdman has a special animus against these elaborate dwellings—to him they symbolized pride, self-indulgence, and departure from God. Jer. xxxvi. 22 is the only instance known to us in Israel of the winter house, with southern aspect; but the practice of having separate houses for winter and summer must have prevailed.

houses of ivory: i. e. panelled or inlaid with ivory, like Ahab's: 1 Kings xxii. 39; cf. Ps. xlv. 8.

great houses: rather, 'many.' The desolation shall be wide, if not general. These are not the king's palaces, but the mansions of the great.

saith the LORD: see ii. 11.

iv. **1. kine of Bashan:** by this he means—and what a sarcasm it is!—the women of Israel, whose luxury, as so often, is the underlying cause of the excesses of **their lords.** Bashan, east of Jordan, was famous for its pastures and breed of cattle and sheep (Deut. xxxii. 14; Ps. xxii. 12; Ezek. xxxix. 18).

oppress the poor (for the phrases cf. 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4; Deut. xxviii. 33), not perhaps deliberately; but all idle luxury at one end of the social scale involves poverty and suffering at the other. And for this unintentional and unconscious cruelty we are held to blame. When the rich lady demands the luxurious appurtenances of her table and toilet from her husband, she is robbing the poor, even though her husband obtains the means of indulgence by legitimate business. It is a searching thought.

and let us drink. The Lord God hath sworn by his 2
holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that
they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue
with fish hooks. And ye shall go out at the breaches, 3
every one straight before her; and ye shall cast *yourselves*
into Harmon, saith the Lord.

Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, *and* 4
multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every

2. The punishment is exile. It is sworn by the holiness of God, as Ps. lxxxix. 35 (cf. vi. 8).

hooks: the image is from fishing. But in the Assyrian monuments we see captives dragged literally with hooks in their mouths (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11 (marg.); Job xl. 24, xli. 2; Isa. xxxvii. 29; Ezek. xxix. 4).

3. breaches: i. e. of the wall of captured Samaria. The captive women go out like cows, each one straight before her (Joshua vi. 5, 20).

Harmon. The place and the allusion are quite unknown. Peshitto, Symmachus, Jerome, took it to mean Armenia; LXX has 'mount Rhomman.' Ewald found in this 'ye shall cast the Rimmon (i. e. the Syrian goddess of love) to the mountain.' Hitzig altered the text and got Hadad-Rimmon; the women were to be prostituted in the cult of that goddess; but we do not know a place called Hadad-Rimmon.

On the whole, we are obliged to leave the passage in obscurity: a threat is often not less terrible because it is unintelligible.

iv. 4–13. *How the dealings of Yahweh have failed of their effect.* The address was perhaps given at some great religious festival.

4, 5. This is gravely ironical, like our Lord's 'Fill ye up the measure of your fathers,' Matt. xxiii. 32, or like Rev. xxii. 11. The Divine irony is moved when external religion is mocked by the inner condition of the heart. Israel was punctilious in the performance of the ritual, which may be most punctual when all moral and spiritual reality has gone out of it.

Come to Beth-el, &c. The charge against Israel is not schism but unreality; the denunciation is parallel to Isaiah's reproach of Judah, Isa. i. 14. The charge is that, while they offer their worship in Beth-el, their social and personal sins continue. Amos's revelation is, 'ritual worship is no tie with God, unless obedience, devotion, and goodness go with it.'

4. multiply transgression. The more zealous the worship, apart from moral conformity to the will of God, the greater the sin (cf. Hos. iv. 8, viii. 11).

5 morning, *and* your tithes every three days; and offer
a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened,
and proclaim freewill offerings and publish them: for
this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord
6 GOD. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in

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every morning: instead of once a year (1 Sam. i. 3, 7, 21).

tithes every three days: instead of every three years (Deut. xiv. 28, xxvi. 12), such was the outward zeal of these unspiritual ritualists! Beth-el and Gilgal, with Beer-sheba, were the great religious centres of the Northern Kingdom (cf. v. 5 and Hos. iv. 15, ix. 15, xii. 11). Wellhausen and Nowack think that the Hebrew can only mean 'bring your sacrifices in the morning, and your tithes three days after,' a description of the course actually pursued at that time.

5. that which is leavened: cf. Lev. vii. 13. It was probably a new and refined form of offering, instead of the old rude unleavened cakes. Later it was forbidden to offer meal with leaven (Exod. xxiii. 18; Lev. ii. 11, vi. 17), but there is nothing to show that Amos knew the developed Levitical law. So Wellhausen and Nowack. Pusey, of course, took the offering of leaven to be the sin; he did not recognize the historic growth in the Pentateuch

thanksgiving: the *tôdâh*, Lev. vii. 12, 13, 15, xxii. 29; Ps. lvi. 12; Jer. xvii. 26, xxxiii. 11.

proclaim ... and publish: not necessarily in an ostentatious way; it only refers to the general invitation to the people to bring the offerings and share in the feast. Prof. G. A. Smith, therefore, though supported by Driver, is surely mistaken in quoting Matt. vi. 2; that is a remnant of the false view that the worship at Beth-el and Gilgal was heterodox or disorderly; but the point rather is, it was peculiarly zealous and earnest, its fault lying in the fact that it was offered by polluted hands and godless hearts.

freewill offerings: Deut. xii. 6, 17.

this liketh you, not Me, saith Yahweh. 'Liketh' for 'pleaseth' is Old English (see Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*).

6. And I also (cf. Gen. xx. 6; Judges ii. 3, 21; 2 Sam. xii. 13; Ps. lii. 5): the meaning rather is: 'While you were offering your ritual worship, I on my part was trying by chastisement to rouse you to a sense of your sin, though in vain.' Because these disciplines of famine and drought and pestilence have failed, the sterner punishment of exile was necessary.

cleanness of teeth: because there was nothing to eat. (LXX reads *kahayon* for *nikyon*, i. e. teeth set on edge, cf. Jer. xxxi. 29.) 1 Kings viii. 37, xviii. 2; ■ Kings iv. 38, viii. 1–6, for famines.

all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. And 7
I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities 8
wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: 9
the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees hath the palmerworm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have sent among you the pestilence after the 10

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not returned: for the pathetic refrain cf. Isa. ix. 12, 17, 21, x. 4.

7. Then drought. The harvest is in April and May. The rain (Heb. *geshem*, not *matar*) was therefore the early or October rain, essential in Palestine to secure a harvest. In January or February it had not yet come (Nowack); cf. Joel ii. 23.

one city . . . not . . . another: in contrast with the general famine in verse 6. On one occasion Thomson found the ground in the Jordan valley like a desert, while at Tiberias the whole country was a paradise of herbs and flowers. This partial rainfall is characteristic of Palestine (*Land and Book*, p. 395). We must suppose that there was a moral discrimination, and the more guilty cities were left without rain; but history does not help us here.

8. wandered: rather, 'tottered,' in the weakness of thirst, as Ps. lix. 15: cf. Ps. cvii. 27; Isa. xxiv. 20, xxix. 9.

9. Then the blasting, the mildew, and the locust, such as Joel describes: cf. Deut. xxviii. 22; 1 Kings viii. 37; Hag. ii. 17.

palmerworm: *gazam*, shearer = locust (Joel i. 4). The blasting caused by the hot east wind (Arab. *sherḳiyeh*), the mildew which blanched the corn, and locust swarms, were and are frequent enough in Palestine to serve as perpetual judgements.

10. pestilence: Lev. xxvi. 25; Deut. xxviii. 21, 27, 60; Ps. xci. 3, 6; Jer. xiv. 12, xxi. 7, 9, &c.: said to have its origin in Egypt, Isa. x. 24, 26.

manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with
the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I
have made the stink of your camp to come up even into
your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith
11 the LORD. I have overthrown *some* among you, as
when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye
were as a brand plucked out of the burning: yet have
12 ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. Therefore
thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will
do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

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your young men: cf. 2 Kings x. 32, xiii. 7, xiv. 26: the invasion of Hazael.

horses: coupled with the men, it shows how they were valued in Israel; they were imported from Egypt or Syria (2 Kings xiii. 7).

stink: of unburied corpses, Isa. xxxiv. 3.

11. The worst judgement of all, earthquake (cf. viii. 8); referred to in i. 1; *Zech.* xiv. 5.

God overthrew: Gen. xix. 24–28: cf. Deut. xxix. 23; Isa. xiii. 19; Jer. xlix. 18; this is rather strange in the mouth of Yahweh. Perhaps, as Wellhausen supposes, Gen. xviii. 19 is a story not peculiar to Israel, but belonging to the general traditions of mankind; thus the general name 'God' would be more appropriate than Yahweh, Israel's God.

brand: Zech. iii. 2; for the thought, see Isa. i. 9.

Prof. G. A. Smith quotes *The Vision of Piers Plowman* to illustrate the view that these national calamities were the judgements of God for national sin. The poet and the prophet are needed for insight into this truth.

The contrast between the people bringing their elaborate worship and Yahweh sending His punitive judgements is only relieved from terror by the thought that the judgements are to form character, and to redeem the lost. But in Israel's case all the judgements have failed, and only the extremity of suffering remains.

12. thus . . . this: what it is we are not told. Pusey thinks the silence more impressive than if the nature of the penalty had been named. Nowack thinks that a clause has fallen out. But if the 'thus' cannot refer to the Exile, which has been frequently named and is always in the prophet's mind, it may apply to the passage which follows v. 1, &c. And this view is the more probable if we are, with modern commentators, to regard verse 13 as a later insertion.

For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the 13
wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that
maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the
high places of the earth; the LORD, the God of hosts,
is his name.

prepare to meet thy God. Nowack thinks this clause is out of place, and urges that the Hebrew for 'thy God,' *Eloheika*, is improbable, because Amos avoids the name *Elohim*. But these subjective difficulties are swept away by the curt majesty of the utterance. Nothing could be grander than this: 'The judgements of God have failed to impress you; now He Himself will confront the guilty people.' And it is the power of this sudden turn which makes one most reluctant to surrender (on mere subjective grounds) the splendid delineation, self-delineation, of Yahweh, God of hosts, in verse 13.

13. Wellhausen says the verse comes from the interpolator of v. 8, 9, ix. 5, 6; Hos. xiii. 4. Nowack urges, partly on linguistic grounds, that all these doxologies in the earlier prophets date from the time of the Second Isaiah. He says the word *bara*, 'create,' was not used before the time of Jeremiah; it means properly 'to cut,' as Joshua xvii. 15, 18; and *secho*, **his thought**, belongs to the later speech[1]. But if this insertion was made, it was finely made; it was itself an inspiration. It carries us at once to the great truth brought out by Mr. Illingworth in his *Divine Immanence* (p. 62), that 'the prima facie aspect of the world conduces to spiritual belief.' The heavens declare, the earth witnesses. Doubt and denial are afterthoughts. The Power in Nature is God. The Maker of mountains and winds, who brings the clouds over the morning, and rides on the summits of things, is also the Spirit within man that interprets his thought. The God whom Israel is to meet is the Maker of heaven and earth, who also witnesses in every conscious breast.

mountains: LXX, 'the thunder.'

wind: or 'spirit.'

his thought: perhaps God's thought (cf. iii. 7).

maketh . . . darkness: *sc.* with cloud or thunder, Ps. xviii.

treadeth upon the high places: as superior to them. If this is Amos's phrase it is finely echoed in the later literature; cf. Job ix. 8, xxii. 14; Ps. civ. 3; Mic. i. 3.

LORD, the God of hosts: iii. 13, v. 16, vi. 8, 14. The curious

[1] This argument is very slight. The word occurs only here; but one hardly different (*sich*) occurs 1 Sam. i. 16; 1 Kings xviii. 27, which cannot be assumed to be late.

5 Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation
2 over you, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is
fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon
3 her land; there is none to raise her up. For thus saith
the Lord GOD: The city that went forth a thousand
shall have an hundred left, and that which went forth an
4 hundred shall have ten left, to the house of Israel. For
thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye
5 me, and ye shall live: but seek not Beth-el, nor enter
into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall

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expression **Yahweh is his name** is paralleled in Second Isaiah (xlvii. 4, xlviii. 2, li. 15, liv. 5) and in Jeremiah (x. 16, xxxi. 35, xxxii. 18, xlvi. 18, xlviii. 15). Prof. G. A. Smith thinks that it suggests a later date, but it can hardly be used to show that the verse was not written by Amos: he may have first used the phrase, and the majesty of it led later prophets to repeat it.

v. 1–17. *Another denunciation, not unmixed with calls to repentance* (verse 14).

1, 2. A brief dirge, in a poetic form. It is like a passing-bell which should strike awe into the careless and hardened. For such a dirge cf. Jer. ix. 17; for taking it up, see Jer. vii. 29; Ezek. xix. 1, xxvi. 17, xxvii. 2.

The virgin of Israel: the country conceived as a young girl, whom Yahweh loved, as in Hosea; cf. Isa. xxxvii. 22, xlvii. 1; Jer. xiv. 17, xlvi. 11, &c.

cast down: dashed—the word in Hebrew has the sound of the crash, *nitshah*—on her own ground. This elegiac form is paralleled in Jer. ix. 10–11; Lam. i. 1.

none to raise her up: the Northern Kingdom never returned from captivity.

3. Evidently in this period the host went out, not as in old times by tribes and families, but by towns and villages. In this great defeat the army would not be decimated only, but nine-tenths would fall. Woe worth the day! Well may the prophet raise a dirge like David's over Saul on Gilboa.

4. Seek ye me, as in Ps. ix. 10; Isa. ix. 13; Jer. x. 21; Hos. x. 12; Zeph. i. 6. The cultus at the great shrines, Beth-el (iii. 4), Gilgal (iv. 5), Beer-sheba, is vain; for it is employed in place of seeking the living God. What a warning! Away with church-going, sacraments, formal prayers, and seek Me!

5. pass not to Beer-sheba: to reach this southern point of the

surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he 6
break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour
and there be none to quench it in Beth-el: ye who turn 7
judgement to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to
the earth; *seek him* that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, 8
and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and

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land, fifty miles south-west of Jerusalem, it was necessary to pass over the whole territory of Judah (viii. 14: cf. 1 Sam. viii. 2).

Gilgal shall surely go into captivity. The Hebrew is a play on words, '*Ha-Gilgal galoh yiglah.*' Prof. G. A. Smith suggests: 'Gilgal shall taste the gall of exile.' Pusey ingeniously suggests the parallel to this play on words: 'London is undone.'

Beth-el shall . . : *lit.* 'shall become Aven, iniquity.' So Hos. iv. 15, who actually calls it 'Beth-aven,' possibly borrowing from Amos (Hos. v. 8, x. 5, 8). Aven means both iniquity, such as idol-worship, and trouble. It is a play on the word.

6. break out. For the comparison of God's wrath with fire, see Deut. iv. 24, xxxii. 22; Isa. x. 17; Jer. iv. 4, xxi. 12.

Nowack points out the defects of grammar in the Hebrew. LXX has Beth-Israel, 'House of Israel,' for Beth-el.

house of Joseph: i. e. Ephraim and Manasseh.

7. This verse seems rather out of place; Prof. G. A. Smith would put it between verses 9 and 10. But wherever it comes, it shows that the grave charge against Israel, which rendered their worship nugatory, was the perversion of justice.

wormwood: cf. vi. 12; Jer. ix. 15, xxiii. 15; Lam. iii. 15, 19; Rev. viii. 11. Absinthe is derived from the Greek word for wormwood. What is so bitter as the award of a corrupt bench?

8, 9. It must be owned that this magnificent doxology is a break in the discourse, and, more than iv. 13, may be suspected as a later insertion.

Tzalmaveth ('shadow of death') is a late word, as Wellhausen says. But, as no one can say who wrote it or when it was written, we do well to take it as it comes, a grand, if disconnected, apostrophe, reminding us that the Lord who bids us seek Him is the Maker of heaven and earth.

Pleiades (*lit.* 'the group') **and Orion** (*lit.* 'the giant,' or rather, 'fool'). This was the Hebrew name for Orion, in later times Nimrod (Job ix. 9, xxxviii. 31).

shadow of death is merely a strong image for the deep darkness.

maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of
9 the earth; the LORD is his name; that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh
10 upon the fortress. They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.
11 Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the
12 wine thereof. For I know how manifold are your transgressions and how mighty are your sins; ye that

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calleth: a fine figure, says Prof. Driver; cf. Job xxxviii. 34; Isa. xlviii. 13.

waters of the sea: ix. 6; cf. Job xii. 15: in great inundations, rather than in clouds and rain.

the LORD is his name: see on iv. 13, ix. 5, 6.

9. destruction: the same word *shōd* in the two clauses is strange. The LXX has *sheber*, 'ruin,' in the first, which is decidedly better. The margin is more exact in rendering 'causeth to flash forth,' cf. verse 6, breaking out as fire. (Cf. Isa. lix. 7, lx. 18.)

10. They hate. Who? The connexion is difficult. If verses 8, 9 are an interpolation, we are carried back to 'ye who turn judgement to wormwood,' verse 7, but the change from second to third person is awkward, especially as in verse 11 we return to the second person. But Hebrew allows a wide latitude in such variations.

the gate: the centre of concourse, of business, and of administration of justice, like the Forum in Rome (Deut. xxv. 7; Ruth iv. 1, 11. 1 Kings xxii. 10; 2 Kings vii. 1 for the gate of Samaria). Rebuking in the gate is illustrated by Jeremiah (xvii. 19, xix. 2) and Isaiah (xxix. 21). No doubt Amos had himself chosen that station for his prophesying.

11. Here the sin of the rich and their punishment are put together in a sentence. Wealth made by injustice is not only insecure but certain to fail. It is clear that the rich had ways then of taking the very bread out of the mouth of the poor, perhaps by high rents, perhaps by taxation, hardly by direct robbery.

houses of hewn stone: Isa. ix. 10, the newest luxury of the capital. **For the threat see Mic. vi. 15; Zeph. i. 13.**

afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate *from their right.* Therefore he that is 13
prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: 14
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish 15
judgement in the gate: it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. Therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of 16
hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in all the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vine- 17

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12. a bribe (1 Sam. xii. 3): it is the same root in Hebrew as 'atonement,' Exod. xxi. 30; Num. xxxv. 31. What a train of thought that opens! Human injustice bribed by cupidity; Divine justice bribed by Divine love and sacrifice!

turn aside: Isa. xxix. 21; Mal. iii. 5.

13. silence: cf. Prov. ix. 7. Terrible is it when the folly and sin of the times silence the wise and the good. While Amos lived at least this silence would not fall.

14. Indeed he passes to a new appeal for repentance, as if he still hoped for his incorrigible people. These two verses are the most hopeful in the book. Prof. G. A. Smith thinks verses 14, 15 are clearly a parenthesis, inserted later, perhaps after Tiglath-Pileser had swept Galilee and Gilead into captivity, but had left Ephraim, 'the remnant of Joseph,' untouched (B. C. 734). This has the advantage of giving a meaning to the 'therefore' of verse 16, which follows on verse 13. But the clauses and paragraphs of our prophet lie often in so loose a connexion that we do well to leave them as they stand and trace a connexion where we can.

15. the remnant of Joseph: i. e. to which before long it will have been reduced, iii. 12.

16, 17. The section ends with a terrible denunciation of sorrow, prefaced by the arresting 'thus saith Yahweh, God of hosts, Lord,' an unusual order of the Divine titles.

Wailing. Still the Arab mourning consists of the women, led by professional wailers, bursting out into wild and maniacal shrieks.

skilful of lamentation: professional mourners, 2 Chron. xxxv. 25; Eccles. xii. 5; Jer. ix. 17.

yards shall be wailing: for I will pass through the midst
18 of thee, saith the LORD. Woe unto you that desire the
day of the LORD! wherefore would ye have the day of
19 the LORD? it is darkness, and not light. As if a man
did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into
the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent
20 bit him. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness,
and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?
21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight

The phrase, **I will pass through the midst,** and the universal wailing, remind one of the visitation of Egypt at the Exodus; but now it is not the Egyptians but the Israelites that are to suffer (Exod. xii. 12).

v. 18—vi. 14. *Captivity, woes, and foes.*

18. the day of the LORD (cf. Isa. ii. 12–21; Joel ii. 1; Zeph. i. 7, 14–16), the good time coming which men instinctively hoped for. Wellhausen aptly quotes Tolstoi: 'You know what kind of people we Russians are. We always hope that some time or other some one will come to heal all our wounds, and free us from all our troubles as from an aching tooth.' This easy idea, that when Yahweh intervenes it must be in their favour, Amos had to eradicate from his contemporaries. Wellhausen unnecessarily adds, 'He would have also protested against the Messias-idea if he had known it.' That is only so far true as that he might have protested against Messianic expectations void of ethical meaning. The day of Yahweh, says Amos, is a great reality, but it rests on moral grounds. For men of evil life, however seemingly religious, it brings darkness, not light.

19. He illustrates the amazed disappointment of this expectation by experiences in his herdman's life. The Syrian bear is fiercer than the lion (Dan. vii. 5: cf. 2 Kings ii. 24; Lam. iii. 10). But worse still to go weary and palpitating into your home, to lean against the wall, and then to be bitten by a deadly serpent—that is the terror. Such a terror is Yahweh's day to wicked men.

21. Amos turns again to denounce the unhallowed cultus. In his scorn, like Jeremiah or Isaiah, he almost implies that the whole practice of sacrifices and assemblies was without Divine sanction. But that is not his meaning; his point is only that, when men are sinful, their worship, however correct, is unacceptable to God.

feasts: *haggim*, the three feasts at which every male had to appear, Exod. xxiii. 14, 17, xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 16.

in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me 22
your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept
them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your
fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy 23
songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But 24
let judgement roll down as waters, and righteousness as
a mighty stream. Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and 25

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will take no delight: so Isa. xi. 3, though the word means literally 'to smell,' and might express the pagan notion that the gods delighted in the reek of the sacrifices (cf. the spiritual illustration, Eph. v. 2), Lev. xxvi. 31; Isa. xi. 3.

assemblies: the spring and harvest feasts, Deut. xvi. 8; Lev. xxiii. 36; Num. xxix. 35; 2 Chron. vii. 9; Neh. viii. 18. But it covers all religious gatherings.

22. Isaiah closely follows this, Isa. i. 14. These are all the duly constituted rites of worship. But Yahweh will have none of them, while they are mingled with iniquity (Exod. xx. 24, xxxii. 6; Judges xx. 26, xxi. 4; 1 Sam. x. 8, xiii. 9, &c.).

the peace offerings: Exod. xvii. 12; Deut. xii. 6.

23. songs: Psalms used in the worship, viii. 10; Isa. xxx. 29.

viols[1]: also used in worship.

The idea in **Take thou away** is that of removing a troublesome burden, Isa. i. 14.

24. Here the whole soul of Amos speaks; cf. v. 7, 15, vi. 12. This is the great prophetic message; its N. T. parallel is James i. 27.

mighty stream: or rather, 'perennial.' The word *êthān* occurs in the name of the seventh month, Ethanim, the month of the perennial streams, and in Exod. xiv. 27; Ps. lxxiv. 15; Jer. v. 15. 'Stream' (Heb. *nahal*) is the Arab. *wady*.

25. The question implies that the Israelites did not offer sacrifices in the wilderness; and yet that was a time of Yahweh's close presence with the people: cf. ii. 9, 10. It was the golden

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[1] The viol, *nebhel*, differed from the *kinnor*, or harp, according to Josephus (*Antiq.* viii. 3. 8), in this way: the *kinnor* had ten strings and was played with a plectrum, the *nebhel* had twelve and was played with the hand. But as the word *nebhel* also means a wine-skin (1 Sam. i. 24) and an earthen jar (Isa. xxx. 14), it is possible that it was more of the nature of a lute. It was used for secular music (Amos vi. 5; Isa. v. 12, xiv. 11) and for religious purposes, as here, 2 Sam. vi. 5, the Psalms, and 1 Chron. xiii. 8, xv. 16, &c.

offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
26 Yea, ye have borne Siccuth your king and Chiun your

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time of Yahweh's love to His beloved, as Hosea puts it, and yet the elaborate ritual of the later religion was unknown. (So Ewald, Wellhausen, Nowack.) Cf. Jer. vii. 22.

This obvious and simple interpretation of course implies that Amos did not know the view expressed in the completed Pentateuch, that the sacrificial, or Levitical, system had been appointed in the wilderness.

Naturally, before the modern view of the growth of the Mosaic institutions and the date of the Pentateuch was reached, interpreters tried, as in the A. V., to read the verse as if it implied that such offerings had been made for forty years.

offerings: i. e. meal offerings, as marg. and verse 22 (cf. Ps. xl. 6; Isa. xix. 21).

26. This verse is very obscure, text and rendering being quite uncertain. To strike out the verse with Wellhausen, or to leave out words with Prof. G. A. Smith, 'But ye shall lift up . . . your king and . . . your god, images which you have made for yourselves,' are desperate expedients. But we can extract no certainty from the words, even if, with Robertson Smith, we remove the words **the star of your god.**

If **Siccuth** and **Chiun** are names of idols, they must be *Sakkut*, the Assyrian god of war (*Adar*), and *Kêwân* (Saturn); so Schrader. Taking the verb as undoubtedly future, we should get a prophecy that the Israelites who offered the vain and empty ritual will presently take up the images of Assyrian gods, and so will go away into exile. Ewald and Robertson Smith, however, suggested that the names are not proper names, but common nouns in the construct case, 'the shrine of your king and the stand of your images,' but these meanings are unsupported. The LXX had a different text, and translated 'you took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Raiphan, their images which ye made for yourselves.' From the LXX Stephen quoted, Acts vii. 43. One thing is certain, that the verse cannot grammatically or historically refer to the desert-life of Israel; the verb is future, and Amos could not have attributed the worship of Assyrian gods to the time of Moses. The only hope of making sense is to accept Schrader's suggestion, and to illustrate the carrying of the helpless idols by Isa. xlvi. 1; Jer. xlviii. 7, xlix. 3. Wellhausen objects that captives would not take their conquerors' gods into captivity. But is not the irony of the situation, that Israel by its sins has implicitly made the Assyrian gods Siccuth and Chiun his own, and in the captivity will only make explicit what has been before implicit?

images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.
Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond 27
Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is the God of
hosts.

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them 6
that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable
men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of
Israel come! Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from 2

Nowack regards the verse as inserted by a reader in the Assyrian period, who saw his compatriots brought into this degrading relation with Assyrian gods. The 'star of your god' should perhaps be 'your star-god,' in reference to Chiun, as the Assyrian Saturn.

27. beyond Damascus: that points to Assyria, the only power which deported their enemies, and whose direction was north-east. Stephen says Babylon, Acts vii. 43.

whose name. The phrase is rather strange; it connects itself with those in the disputed doxologies, iv. 13, v. 8, ix. 6.

Prof. Driver traces the growth of Amos's great teaching against the empty ceremonialism through all the prophets, Hos. vi. 6; Isa. i. 10–17; Mic. vi. 6–8; Jer. vi. 19, 20, vii. 1–15, 21–23; Isa. lxvi. 2–4; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Ps. xl. 6–8, l. 13–15, li. 16, 17; Prov. xv. 8, xxi. 27; Ecclus. xxxiv. 18, xxxv. 11, a most instructive series of quotations.

vi. *The woes turn from the godless worshippers to the godless rich.*

1. at ease in Zion: Isa. xxxii. 9; first the ruling classes in Jerusalem are denounced, then the same class in Samaria, the Northern capital.

notable men of the chief: cf. Num. i. 17, those 'expressed by name,' the chiefs and princes, as we should say 'the titled.' Pusey thinks that the phrase is archaic and recalls the early glories of Israel, as, were we to call the peers 'the barons of England,' we should recall the days of Magna Charta. The word 'chief' addressed to them is sarcastic, as in the Revolution to name men aristocrats, which means best, implied the worst.

Prof. G. A. Smith takes **chief of the nations** to mean the foremost nation, as Israel considered itself. But that is rendered difficult by the clause **to whom the house of Israel come.** It is far simpler to take the phrase as equal to 'the upper classes,' who, as always, set the fashion and formed the aspirations of the people as a whole.

2. This verse is rendered insipid by Pusey, and ejected by

thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these

Prof. G. A. Smith. As Wellhausen says, it only acquires meaning if we regard the three kingdoms mentioned as examples of great states which have been violent and wicked, and have been overtaken by 'the evil day.'

Then **be they,** &c., means, 'Are these luxurious Israelites better than those humiliated peoples?' We must, to make it clear, apply to the plural adjective 'better' the Heb. *attem*, 'you,' and the comparative *min* must be placed before **their border,** viz., 'is your border greater than their border[1]?'

But when by this slight alteration we gain a clear sense, we have the difficulty that, so far as we know, two of the three states were not conquered before the time of Amos (Isa. x. 9, xxxvii. 13). Hamath fell under the assault of Sargon in 720, and if Calneh (Gen. x. 10) is identical with the Kulaim of the inscriptions, it fell under the assault of Sargon in 711. Gath, on the other hand, was taken by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6); and as it was omitted by Amos among the Philistine cities (i. 7, 8), we may assume that it had not recovered its position when Amos wrote.

But we can hardly escape the conclusion to which Wellhausen comes, that the verse was inserted at the end of the eighth century, after the fall of Calneh and Hamath. To leave out the verse creates no gap.

Calneh. It may be the city on the Euphrates of Gen. x. 10. But it would be much more intelligible here if we might identify it with Kullanhon, six miles from Tel Arfad, a little north of Aleppo: in Isa. x. 9 Arpad and Calneh are mentioned together. Or, with Dillmann, we may find it in Kunnhea, south-east of Antioch, seventy-five miles north of Hamath (see Driver).

Hamath: 150 miles north of Dan, on the Orontes, an independent kingdom (2 Sam. viii. 9). The entering to Hamath, the pass between the Lebanons, was the northern boundary of Israel (e. g. 2 Kings xiv. 25). It is often mentioned in the Assyrian Inscriptions; in 740 Tiglath-Pileser III, and in 720 Sargon overpowered it.

Gath. Sargon took it in 711, if Gimtu Asdudim may be identified with it. Prof. G. A. Smith seeks the site on a height eleven miles south of Ekron, not far from Ashdod.

[1] Prof. Driver follows Ewald, Hitzig, Keil, W. R. Smith, in the ordinary view that these three cities are quoted as examples of peculiarly flourishing states, with which Israel complacently compared themselves. But he does not see why they are selected as illustrations of prosperity above all others. And the verse remains on this supposition hopelessly insipid.

kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?
Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of 3
violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and 4
stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs
out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the
stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that 5
devise for themselves instruments of music, like David;
that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the 6
chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction

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3. Isa. v follows this very closely. They would not listen to the notion of an impending visitation; violence was enthroned on their tribunals, Isa. v. 18.

vi. 4–6. *A picture of luxurious life which was revolting to the Puritan austerity of the herdman prophet.*

4. beds: i. e. divans, iii. 12.

stretch themselves: sprawl out, so verse 7. Looseness of gesture goes with looseness of morals. To lie at table was a new luxurious custom recently introduced. Formerly they sat at table, Gen. xxvii. 19; Judges xix. 6; 1 Sam. xx. 5, 24.

midst of the stall: the general fold contains a railed-off portion for calves or lambs frequently in Palestine to this day. To eat lambs and stalled calves is itself a luxury.

sing idle songs: one word, a participle, in Hebrew; the word (*pārat*) occurs only here. Pusey gives the meaning as 'making a hurried flow of unmeaning words to the sound of the viol.' They sang songs, not without words but without sense.

like David. Wellhausen sees in this a weighty evidence that David was famous in the time of Amos not so much for religious Psalms as for secular music. But this is to build too much on a narrow foundation. It is quite possible that the comparison 'like David' is a bold satirical slash. Like David, the great musician who introduced instruments of music into the Divine worship (1 Chron. xv. 16, 19–21, 24; 2 Chron. xxix. 25, 26), they also invent instruments, but for frivolous songs and to accompany their drinking-bouts!

bowls: ewers, used for water, to dash over the altar (Exod. xxvii. 3; 1 Kings vii. 40; 2 Kings xii. 3).

chief ointments: like 1 Kings x. 10; Ezek. xxvii. 22; Mark xiv. 3, 5.

the affliction of Joseph: this must mean the affliction which was looming upon the horizon, the evil day, which these revellers put far away. At present Joseph (i. e. Ephraim and Manasseh)

7 of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go captive with the
first that go captive, and the revelry of them that
8 stretched themselves shall pass away. The Lord GOD
hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD, the God of hosts:
I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces:
therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.
9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in
10 one house, that they shall die. And when a man's

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seemed in the height of prosperity. It is the great evil of luxury that it blinds the eyes to its inevitable moral consequences. We need not suppose that the prophecy was written after 734, when Tiglath-Pileser had taken Gilead and Galilee captive: the affliction of Joseph was yet in the future.

affliction: rather, 'breach' or 'wound,' as Isa. xxx. 26; Jer. vi. 14.

7. now: the turning-point of the prophetic utterance; cf. Hos. ii. 12, v. 7.

with the first: they shall retain their pre-eminence as to first—to suffer.

that stretched themselves: here the moral meaning predominates, and the word is equivalent to 'dissolute.'

8. sworn by himself: iv. 2.

The Lord GOD hath sworn . . . saith the LORD is a strange expression.

excellency: rather, 'pride'; cf. verse 13: viz. either the vain-glorious temper, Hos. v. 5, vii. 10, or the things they are proud of, Nahum ii. 3; Zech. ix. 6.

deliver up: Deut. xxxii. 30.

the city: Samaria.

vi. 9, 10. *A vivid picture of a population which is destroyed by the famine or the pestilence of the long three years' siege of Samaria.* It is a difficulty that ten men left in a house is a large number even for a palace, iii. 15. Perhaps we may construe, with Prof. G. A. Smith, 'if there be left ten men in one house, and they die,' and suppose that the apodosis is lost, or perhaps merged in verse 10.

But **10** is very difficult to construe. We have three words beginning the verse, 'And there shall take him up his uncle, and his burner'; but to whom 'his' refers is not stated. The difficulties of exposition are, says Wellhausen, insuperable. And it is plain that verses 9, 10 are an interpolation between 8 and 11. But notwithstanding grammatical difficulties a grim meaning

uncle shall take him up, even he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is in the innermost parts of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No; then shall he say, Hold thy peace; for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD. For, behold, the LORD 11
commandeth, and the great house shall be smitten with breaches, and the little house with clefts. Shall horses 12
run upon the rock? will one plow *there* with oxen? that ye have turned judgement into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood: ye which rejoice in a 13
thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us

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glimmers through the words. There are ten men in the house; they are all supposed to be dead. An uncle, because no nearer relation survives, comes to bury one of them, or rather, in the stress of famine and plague, to burn the bones, contrary to Hebrew custom —the burning of Saul and his sons is the only example in the O. T.—except the burning of criminals, Gen. xxxviii. 24; Lev. xx. 14, xxi. 9; Joshua vii. 15, 25. Prof. Driver thinks the **burner** may be only the one who burnt spices in honour of the dead, ■ Chron. xvi. 14, xxi. 19; Jer. xxxiv. 5. The question is put, 'Is there another survivor?' And a sepulchral voice answers, 'No!' feeling that it too will soon be silent. And in awe the other says, 'Hush!' The Holy Name may not be mentioned in a calamity so appalling, lest it bring down an avalanche of further vengeance (so Prof. G. A. Smith).

11. The Targum says the great house is Israel, and the little one Judah. But this is arbitrary; the reference is to the palace and the cottage.

12 gives the ground of this judgement, the perversion of justice. Such wickedness is as sure to provoke disaster, or at least to end in disappointment, as to set horses climbing pinnacles of rock, or oxen to plough in the same material.

Michaelis greatly improved the second clause of the comparison by reading *babbeḳarim* (the plural for ox does not occur) as *babbakar yam*, 'Shall one plough the sea with an ox?'—an almost certain correction.

gall: rather 'poison,' the same word as Hos. x. 4, 'hemlock.' For **wormwood**, cf. v. 7.

13. The words sound less strange in English than in Hebrew: they mean that iniquity and its gains are, as it were, a nothing,

14 horns by our own strength? For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD, the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the brook of the Arabah.

7 Thus the Lord GOD shewed me: and, behold, he

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and the boast 'we have taken horns' (Deut. xxxiii. 17) is simply the boast of power. But Grätz first pointed out that the two Hebrew words, *Lodebar* and *Karnaim*, might be two places, which these wealthy Israelites boasted of having taken. The one is found in Joshua xiii. 26; 2 Sam. ix. 4, 5, xvii. 27; the other in Gen. xiv. 5 and 1 Macc. v. 42 (LXX). Both towns were in Gilead, the battle-ground between Israel and Syria. They had both perhaps recently been taken by Israel in Jeroboam II's victorious wars; but not by his own strength, rather by the fact that Syria was threatened by Assyria. Prof. G. A. Smith thinks the two towns, out of perhaps many, were named because of their meaning and the play upon the words.

14. In contrast with these petty conquests, a great enemy is soon to come, viz. Assyria, from beyond the northern boundary, Hamath (which Jeroboam II had recovered to Israel, 2 Kings xiv. 25, 28). In that passage of the history the phrase is used 'from the entering in of Hamath (i. e. where the defile ran up to Hamath) unto the sea of the Arabah' (i. e. the Dead Sea). The **brook** of the Arabah is more difficult to determine; it must be some wady from the east entering the plain of the Jordan at the southern boundary of the kingdom of Israel. Nowack identifies it with the wady el-Aḥsa (Hesi, on Bartholomew's and G. A. Smith's wonderful map of Palestine), between Moab and Edom at the southern end of the Dead Sea (Isa. xv. 7), an ideal rather than the practical limit of Israel.

Thus ends the great series of threatenings, ruin, affliction, and exile!

SECTION III.

vii–ix. *A series of visions, interspersed with a narrative and addresses.*

Vision is the beginning of prophecy (Hos. xii. 10), and the four visions given here explain perhaps how Amos the herdman became a prophet. The form of prophetic revelation, says Ewald, belongs to psychology. We are to think of actual visions, not of prophetic thoughts clothed in that form. They are chronologically recorded, as the remarkable interposition of the biographical narrative between the third and the fourth, vii. 10–17, seems to show.

seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more: and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the 9
sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam 10
king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee

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between the Lord and His prophet, cf. Exod. xxxiii. 12, 17; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

9. Isaac: Amos alone uses this Patriarch's name to describe Israel (verse 16). Fanciful reasons are offered, but perhaps the **high places of Isaac** refer to Beer-sheba (Gen. xxvi. 24). 'High places = sanctuaries.' Prof. Driver's note on the high places is a masterpiece of condensation. The high place outside the town was an institution borrowed from the Canaanite (Deut. xii. 2). It was considered quite correct in Samuel's time (1 Kings iii. 4, xviii. 30). After the Deuteronomic law, B.C. 610, historians read back into the past a condemnation of these local sanctuaries, which had now become illegal. There is no condemnation of the high places as such; that only began after the Deuteronomist, in the seventh century B.C. The holy places of convocation and worship are to perish.

the house of Jeroboam: cf. Hos. i. 4.

the sword: an invading army.

In this third judgement doom was irrevocable, and the prophet did not pray for deliverance.

10. This threat, uttered against the sanctuaries, and against the royal house, provoked the interference of the official guardian of the royal sanctuary of Beth-el. The sanctuaries were, according to the faith of the time, the dwelling-place of Yahweh; to predict their destruction was to threaten Him! The priest Amaziah therefore treats the prophet as one who has uttered treason against the country, and against Yahweh, the God of the land, and tries to incense Jeroboam by exaggerating what Amos had said against the king. The priest usually assails the prophet, but bases his charge, not on his own grudge, but on an alleged political offence: 'he speaketh against Caesar' John xix. 12 (cf. Jer. xxxvii. 13, xxxviii. 4, where the politicians, and not the priests, would suppress the prophet).

hath conspired: i. e. 'banded against' (1 Sam. xxii. 8, 13; 1 Kings xv. 27, xvi. 9, 16; 2 Kings x. 9, xiv. 19, xv. 10, 15, 25, xxi. 23). But there is no sign that Amos had formed a party.

in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able
11 to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam
shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led
12 away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto
Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of
13 Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but
prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the
14 king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house. Then answered
Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither

He stood in perilous solitude. His only fellow conspirator was God.

the land is not able to bear: *lit.* 'contain.' Thus the interested opponent of reform always pleads his country's good.

11. Jeroboam shall die by the sword: this Amos had not said; it was not Jeroboam, but the house of Jeroboam, that was thus to be cut off; which came to pass. Amaziah omits all that Amos had said of the iniquities, of repentance, of the meaning of punishment. This *suppressio veri* is a *suggestio falsi*. Amos was not attacking the king or the land, but urging repentance, under the threat of punishment. Strange to say, Jeroboam took no notice of the priest's charge.

12. O thou seer (*ḥozeh*, the word used 2 Sam. xxiv. 11; 2 Chron. xxix. 25; Isa. xxix. 10; Mic. iii. 7: *rō'eh* is used in 1 Sam. ix. 9, 11, 18, 19). Amaziah recognizes that Amos is a prophet, and rejects him as such, just as the Jews recognized and rejected Christ on the cross. But he had the contemptuous view of the prophet, which was partially justified by the corruption of the prophetic schools (Mic. iii. 5), and which is the eternal pretext why men will not listen to the prophet, but will slay him and build his tomb.

land of Judah: to which Amos belonged, and where predictions of Israel's fall might be not unacceptable, but also the proper home of prophecy.

there eat bread: implying that he prophesied from mercenary motives (cf. 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8; Isa. xxx. 10; Ezek. xiii. 19; Mic. iii. 5).

13. the king's sanctuary: that is the perversion of a State religion. The sanctuary is God's, Exod. xxv. 8; Lev. xix. 30, xxvi. 2. In the king's sanctuary the voice of the true prophet is too often silenced. Hardly can a prophet be a courtier.

14. Amos's reply defends him from the charge of being a professional prophet, one of 'the sons of the prophets' (1 Kings xx. 35; 2 Kings ii. 3, iv. 1, v. 22, &c.). He was the founder, and purest type, of a new order of prophecy (Wellhausen).

was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a
dresser of sycomore trees: and the LORD took me from 15
following the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go,
prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear 16
thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not
against Israel, and drop not *thy word* against the house
of Isaac; therefore thus saith the LORD: Thy wife shall 17
be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters
shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by

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prophet's son: thus in Syriac *bar naggārê*, 'son of the carpenters,' means a member of a carpenters' guild.

Bôker, a herdman, is a misreading for *nôḳed*; cf. i. 1. It was not cattle, but sheep and goats, that he tended.

sycomore trees: 1 Kings x. 27; Isa. ix. 10; Luke xix. 4. He grew and gathered the figs of the sycomore (rather, the fig-mulberry), and dressed them by pinching to promote their growth (Theophr. *Hist. Plant.* iv. 2; Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xiii. 14). The tree attains the size of a walnut-tree; the fruit, the size of small figs, insipid and woody, grows out of the stem in clusters. An insect has to be removed from the top before it is eatable; this may be the dressing which gave Amos his occupation. The tree did not grow on the heights of Tekoa, but nearer the Dead Sea, at a level of 1,000 feet. They were the herdman's food.

15. flock: *sc.* the sheep of the special breed, Arab. *naḳaa* (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 71).

16. Amaziah had said 'Do not prophesy.' Amos replies by prophesying specifically about him, and giving to the general threat of conquest and exile a terrible personal application.

drop not: Ezek. xx. 46, xxi. 2; Mic. ii. 6, 11. A synonym for 'prophesy.' The contrast is between 'Thou sayest' and 'Thus saith the Lord.'

17. an harlot: this happened generally in the capture of a city in ancient warfare (Isa. xiii. 16; Zech. xiv. 2).

in the city: where she had been the chief lady (Wellhausen). On the other hand, even the Assyrians did not usually butcher the women; it was an aggravation of this unfortunate priest's doom that his daughters would fall with their brothers. His property would be put up to auction in lots. And he would die in the unclean land, where, according to his belief, his God would not be, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19; Hos. ix. 3, 4.

divided by line: 2 Kings xvii. 24; Jer. vi. 12; Mic. ii. 4.

line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

8 Thus the Lord God shewed me: and behold, a basket
2 of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel;
3 I will not again pass by them any more. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: the dead bodies shall be many; in every
4 place shall they cast them forth with silence. Hear this,

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led away captive. The opposition of the priest leads to this clear and unveiled forecast of exile.

viii. 1–3. To all appearance this fourth Vision followed immediately on Amaziah's interruption. Amos waited to deliver this final word before quitting Beth-el.

1. summer fruit: Heb. *ḳaitz* (2 Sam. xvi. 2; Jer. xl. 10), while the Hebrew for 'end' is *ḳetz*. Prof. Driver aptly illustrates this prophecy turning on a play upon words by Jer. i. 11, 12, where the thought of watching (*shōḳēd*) produces by association the image of the almond-tree (*shaḳed*). But it is not only a play on the words *ḳaitz* and *ḳetz*; it also expresses the fact 'the harvest is the end of the world' (Matt. xiii. 39). Jer. xxiv uses a similar image.

2. I will not again pass by them: cf. vii. 8. It is very terrible when we wish God to pass by us, for it reveals the awful discord between us. Things are not right until our one prayer is, 'Lord, abide with us.'

3. The awful vision of the final fall; the temple songs (cf. v. 23, ix. 1) turned into lamentation, the dead bodies in the street. 'In every place, He hath cast out; hush!' so we should render these, probably the last spoken, words of the first prophet who wrote.

viii. 4–14. From here to the end are a number of different oracles, which are loosely connected with one another, 'probably containing,' says Prof. G. A. Smith, 'some verses which are not from Amos himself.' The doubt is suggested by the unexpected change from the hopeless 'end' of viii. 3 into the joyous prospect of ix. 11. This has given rise to the suggestion that a later hand tried to relieve the gloom of the book by a more hopeful vision.

O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the
poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon 5
be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that
we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and
the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of

But in the absence of any other proof that the words are not from Amos, we may cling to the belief that the Lord who sent the visions to the herdman gave him the two aspects of the Divine revelation lying side by side, the sufferings which were inevitable, and the glory which should follow.

viii. 4–6. This is an echo of ii. 6–8, but it is no weak echo, rather a vigorous reassertion of the former judgement.

4. this: viz. what follows in verse 7.

swallow up. Wellhausen would here, as in ii. 7, read *hashshaōphim*, 'who tread down'; cf. Ps. lvi. 1, 2, lvii. 3.

cause . . . to fail. The verb is in the infinitive, and has therefore no construction. Prof. Driver, however, justifies the infinitive as an idiom, meaning 'who are for making the poor of the land to cease' (*Hebrew Tenses*, § 206). And so Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, § 96. Also, says Wellhausen, it cannot mean 'to get rid of.' The conjecture therefore in our version must be regarded only as a conjecture. The LXX has a word which they could render by 'and oppressing' (cf. iv. 1).

5. The eagerness to be at business all through the holy day (cf. Num. xxviii. 11; 2 Kings iv. 23; Hos. ii. 11) and sabbath is closely connected with fraudulent dealings. If we violate the day of rest by thoughts of gain, we shall probably not hesitate to pursue our gain by dishonest methods, short measures, falsified weights, when we are estimating payment, and balances of deceit.

making the ephah small . . . pair of shoes is practically a parenthesis, a hurried description of their dishonest dealings, put shamelessly in their own mouths.

ephah small, &c. The ephah was about eight gallons. They gave short measure in selling the necessaries of life, while weighing the price to be paid against a weight that was unduly heavy. Strange to say, Dr. Chaplin found in 1890 on the site of Samaria one of these 'weighted shekels.' It is in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It represents a shekel of 156 grains instead of 135 (*Pal. Explor. Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1894, p. 229). Cf. Lev. xix. 35; Deut. xxv. 13–16; Prov. xi. 1, xvi. 11, xx. 10; Hos. xii. 7; Mic. vi. 10. It was part of the law of holiness, Lev. xix. 35, to secure just weights, and Ezekiel saw this as one of the points in his ideal reconstruction of the State, Ezek. xlv. 9–12.

6 deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the
needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat.
7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely
8 I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the
land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth
therein? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and
it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of
9 Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the

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6. poor for silver, &c.: see ii. 6, but the words do not come in appropriately here, for this buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes is not connected with the selling of corn, which is the subject of the preceding words. In ii. 6 the wealthy 'sold the righteous for silver and shoes'; here the traders 'buy' them for the same price. We must suppose that the great lords sold up the poor to the dealers for trifling sums; and then possibly the dealers sold their purchases as slaves beyond the borders of Israel. But it seems as if Amos is breathlessly piling together the outrages of the wealthy owners and merchants without seeking to establish a connexion between the clauses. We cannot join Wellhausen in thinking the verse suspicious.

the refuse of the wheat: this completes the sentence, 'set forth wheat,' of verse 5 after the parenthesis. The 'refuse' means that for the high prices they propose to give poor stuff. And this is their thought on the holy day and the sabbath!

7. Now follows the sentence of Yahweh which was referred to as 'this' in verse 4.

the excellency of Jacob (iv. 2, vi. 8; Hos. v. 5, vii. 10) must mean the pride of Jacob, which is unfortunately so unchanging that it is the suitable reinforcement of an oath. God is indignant at the treatment of the poor, and at the pride which leads to it. And by that pride He swears to send the punishment.

8. The earthquake had already been sent as a tentative punishment (iv. 11). The comparison of the earthquake to the rising of the Nile which takes a whole month, and to the sinking of the waters which takes another month, is considered by some commentators as unsuitable. But the threat is apocalyptic, cf. Isa. xxiv. 19, 20. And there is an awful suggestion in the thought of an earthquake, which is not a momentary shudder, but the long steady rise and fall of the land, which has become unstable and fluid. After all, the earthquake is not literal; it is the symbol of the complete ruin of the land (cf. ix. 5).

9. Cf. Isa. xiii. 10; Joel ii. 2, iii. 15. According to Oppolzer's

Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon,
and I will darken the earth in the clear day. And I will 10
turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into
lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all
loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it
as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as
a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord 11
GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine
of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words
of the LORD. And they shall wander from sea to sea, 12
and from the north even to the east; they shall run to

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chart, there was a complete eclipse of the sun in Amos's lifetime, June 15, 763 B. C. It would be observable at Jerusalem. It is referred to in the Assyrian annals (Geo. Smith, *Eponym. Canon*, pp. 46, 47). Of course the eclipse, like the earthquake, is only an image.

10. The signs of mourning here referred to were forbidden in the Deuteronomic legislation (Deut. xiv. 1), which presumably Amos did not know. It was a great severity of mourning not only to change the garment but to shear off the hair of women and the beard of men.

mourning for an only son recalls the mourning in Egypt when Israel's glorious day began. We may think also of the mourning for Tammuz, Ezek. viii. 14. In Tobit ii. 6 this prophecy of Amos is recognized as fulfilled in an event of the day, as so often it has been before and since.

11, 12. The most terrible threat of all. To earthquake and eclipse is added famine—famine for the word of the Lord, when the prophets now silenced would be welcomed, the gospel now rejected would be desired, as the thirsty desire water (cf. 1 Sam. xxviii. 6; Mic. iii. 6).

wander: i. e. go tottering, iv. 8; cf. Lam. iv. 15.

north . . . to the east: i. e. from the region of dark to the region of sunrise (cf. description of the land in Num. xxxiv. 3–12). Nowack, following Wellhausen, strikes out the verses as a later addition, because he says verse 13 refers to a literal and not a metaphorical thirst. But why must it be regarded as literal? Nothing can be more natural than this, that in the famine for the word of God the young suffer most. Older people may survive on traditions of the past, but the young hunger and thirst for the clear unmistakable utterance of God.

and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find
13 it. In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men
14 faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria,
and say, As thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, As the way of
Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise
up again.

9 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar: and he
said, Smite the chapiters, that the thresholds may shake:

For **seek the word** cf. 1 Kings xxii. 5; 2 Kings iii. 11; Jer. xxxvii. 17.

13. There is no need therefore to strike out verses 11, 12 and connect verse 13 with 10, as even Prof. G. A. Smith proposes.

14. the sin of Samaria (cf. Deut. ix. 21): the golden calf, probably at Beth-el, to which Jeroboam seduced the people (cf. Hos. viii. 5, 6, x. 5). But Wellhausen thinks this could not have been an expression of Amos, who does not elsewhere attack any form of cultus, but only the moral evil connected with it all. Nor does Amos elsewhere use Samaria for Israel.

For 'swearing' as an expression of worship, see Deut. vi. 13, x. 20; Isa. xlviii. 1; Jer. xii. 16.

thy God, O Dan does not refer to another God than Yahweh; it is only like 'Our Lady of Loretto' as distinct from 'Our Lady of Lourdes'—the calf was set up by Jeroboam, 1 Kings xii. 29.

As the way of Beer-sheba liveth: i. e. not the manner of the Beer-sheba shrine, but the road to it. This very startling expression, Prof. G. A. Smith says, is illustrated by Arab usage to this day. Arabs will swear 'by the life of this fire or of this coffee.' And Moslems affirm their oaths by the sacred way to Mecca. So changeless is the East.

ix. 1–6. *A vision of Nemesis.* All the sternness and rigour of Amos are in this vision. It is unrelieved by a touch of mercy or relenting. It is well to compare this vision of the Lord upon the altar with the vision which Isaiah had of Him in the temple, Isa. vi. Here the whole people are conceived as being in the house of God, and buried beneath its ruins, like the Philistines in the temple of Dagon.

1. standing: rather, 'stationed.'

beside is 'leaning over'; cf. vii. 7; Num. xxiii. 3, 6; 1 Kings xiii. 1.

the altar: *sc.* at Beth-el, just where Jeroboam stood in 1 Kings xiii. 1.

Smite: the command is to the prophet.

chapiters (Zeph. ii. 14): it is singular. The capital of the

and break them in pieces on the head of all of them;
and I will slay the last of them with the sword: there
shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one
of them escape. Though they dig into hell, thence shall 2
mine hand take them; and though they climb up to
heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though 3
they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search
and take them out thence; and though they be hid from
my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command
the serpent, and he shall bite them. And though they 4
go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I
command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will
set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

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pillar is to be smitten with such force that it trembles in its socket. The pillars supported the roof of the house.

break them: *sc.* the pillars and all that they support.

there shall not one of them, &c. The marginal reading is more literal: 'he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.'

2. hell . . . heaven: the two opposite poles of space, Job xi. 8, xxvi. 5; Ezek. xxxii. 18: cf. Ps. cxxxix. 7, of which Psalm this passage is, says Prof. G. A. Smith, a ruder draft.

bring them down. This expression is the hook by which Obadiah (verse 4) is attached to Amos in the Canon.

3. Carmel, springing as it were out of the sea, is the appropriate antithesis to the depths of the sea. The top of Carmel was an *ἄβατον*, i. e. an asylum where cattle were protected by religious sanctions (Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, i. 146). It is also honeycombed with caves in which, said Schultz, an army could hide.

the serpent: i. e. leviathan or tannin, Isa. xxvii. 1. The hydrophidae are venomous sea-serpents found in the Indian and Pacific oceans, which the fishermen dread to see caught in their nets; cf. the legend of Perseus and the sea-monster on that coast.

4. captivity: to an Israelite, with his thought of a local god, as bad as Sheol. Yahweh will use the Assyrians, as He will use leviathan, in the punishment of His sinful people. There is no escape from God on earth or above or beneath it. Terrible is it when He watches us for evil and not for good (Ps. xxi. 10, xxxiv. 16; Jer. xxi. 10).

5 For the Lord, the GOD of hosts, *is* he that toucheth the
land and it melteth, and all that dwell therein shall
mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like the River; and
6 shall sink again, like the River of Egypt; *it is* he that
buildeth his chambers in the heaven, and hath founded
his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters
of the sea and poureth them out upon the face of the
7 earth; the LORD is his name. Are ye not as the children
of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith

5, 6. These verses, like iv. 13, v. 8, 9, are treated by commentators as a later interpolation. But in this case the repetition of the phrase used in viii. 8 may give a special reason for assigning them to Amos. It need not be argued how appropriate is this designation of the Omnipotent and Omniscient One, in closing the description of His searching and inexorable judgement. There is no real difficulty in the description being in the third and not in the first person, as verses 1–4. It is admittedly the prophet's comment, the delineation of Him whom he saw standing beside the altar.

the Lord, the GOD of hosts, should be 'Yahweh of hosts,' v. 14–16, vi. 8, iii. 13, vi. 14. The phrases 'Yahweh is his name' and 'Yahweh of Hosts' belong rather to the later prophets.

toucheth the land: it is the picture of a storm, Judges v. 4; Ps. xlvi. 6, lxxv. 3, civ. 32; Mic. i. 4.

the River: see viii. 8.

6. vault, *aguddah*, is equivalent to the more familiar *rakia*, the firmament, Job xxvi. 11, the vast hemispherical vault which to an eye innocent of the truths of astronomy seems to rest as a huge cupola upon the earth (Driver).

calleth for the waters: see v. 8.

ix. 7–10. *The awful severity of the judgement relents a little.*

7. children of the Ethiopians: the descendants of Ham, the despised and accursed branch of Noah's family, cf. Jer. xiii. 23; they inhabited what is the modern Soudan (Gen. x. 6, 7; Isa. xi. 11, xviii. 1, xx. 3). To our ears it sounds beautiful and evangelic that the Lord cares for the Ethiopians, and brought the Philistines into their land from Caphtor, and the Syrians into Damascus from Kir, just as He brought Israel out of Egypt to Canaan. But to Israel, with his intense sense of privilege, nothing could sound more terrible or contemptuous. Yahweh regards him only as one of the peoples of the earth! This goes a step beyond even iii. 2–3.

the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD 8
are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. For, lo, 9
I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as *corn* is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners 10

Caphtor: Crete, Deut. ii. 23; Jer. xlvii. 4. In 1 Sam. xxx. 14; Ezek. xxv. 16; Zeph. ii. 5, the Philistines are called Cherethites, i. e. Cretans.

Kir: cf. i. 5.

But while Amos has reduced Israel to one of the nations, he still regards him as Yahweh's people. 'Kindled his relentings are.' **I will destroy . . . saving that I will not utterly destroy.** Nowack and others regard the rest of the book, verses 8–15, as a Messianic addition of a later time. Of course it is impossible to exactly adjust this relenting with the finality of judgement repeatedly threatened in the book right through up to ix. 8. But to say that the true Amos ceases in the middle of this verse, and another and more hopeful hand finishes the book, is to strike out the mystery and the paradox of prophecy as the utterance of the Divine mind. It is a logical inconsistency, but yet, nay, for that reason, it is a moral truth. As one watches the clouded sky one says in successive sentences, 'There is not a touch of blue, but the blue breaks through.' When the cloud-pack is thickest, as in verses 1–6, immediately the sun of the Divine love and mercy begins to pierce it. In the absence therefore of any external evidence that these verses did not come from Amos, we may read them as the expression of that beautiful truth, 'at evening-time it shall be light.'

8. the sinful kingdom will, it is true, be destroyed, and as a kingdom cease to exist. This applies to the whole of Jacob, Southern and Northern Kingdoms alike. But a remnant shall survive. While the wicked perish, the good, like grain sifted in a sieve, shall be saved. It is of course a paradox. But to dismiss it on that account, in the interests of logical coherency, is to miss the wonder and the unexpectedness of revelation which gives an insight into the nature and dealings of God.

9. grain: it is *lit.* 'a pebble' (2 Sam. xvii. 13). Our translators have forced the word to gain sense, just as in verse 10 they have

of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days
12 of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom,

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to constrain the verbal forms to give, as they certainly do not in the Hebrew text, the meaning which is evidently intended. Preuschen (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1895, p. 24) keeps 'pebble,' and refers to the pebbles still left in the sieve in Syria for cleansing the winnowed corn.

10. Cf. Isa. v. 19; Jer. xxiii. 17; Ezek. xii. 22, 27; Mic. iii. 11. Now the language breaks out into pure hope and the forecast of good.

11. In that day, *sc.* the day of hopeless disaster, viii. 9, 12, 13, ix. 1, 10, the better dawn will break. Wellhausen refers the bright promise to the Southern Kingdom, which is to flourish when the Northern is destroyed. But that reference is far too limited. When the Northern Kingdom fell the 'tabernacle of David,' in the sense of the monarchy at Jerusalem, was not yet fallen. And 'my people Israel' in verse 14 must mean the whole of Israel, Northern and Southern Kingdoms alike.

tabernacle of David, therefore, is evidently Messianic. Tabernacle, that is hut or tent, is used to indicate that the stately palaces of David had been reduced very low (Isa. i. 8) before this restoration took place. One of the Jewish designations of Messiah, 'the Son of the fallen,' was taken from this passage (Talmud, Sanhedr. f. 96. 2; Schoettq, *De Mess.* p. 16). When Amos wrote Azariah (Uzziah) was on the throne (2 Kings xiv. 22), and David's throne was in a flourishing condition. As Keil saw, the range of the prophecy goes quite beyond the present. By the 'tabernacle of David' Amos means the glory of the undivided kingdom, the promise which was at the beginning, which was so sadly frustrated in the historical times, but which was to receive so wonderful and spiritual a fulfilment in Christ.

days of old: viz. the golden age of the early monarchy, which always remained a prophecy of the great future, the Messianic kingdom.

12. Though the reference is really spiritual, it still remains under the form of the old historical circumstances, viz. David subduing Edom and the surrounding peoples, and bringing them into the lot of the Lord; cf. Ps. lx. 8.

remnant of Edom: because these nations will have been

and all the nations, which are called by my name, saith
the LORD that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith 13
the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the
mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall

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purged, and only the righteous remnant will come into the kingdom (i. 11, 12).

which are called by my name: rather, 'over whom my name has been called:' the phrase signifies being in the possession of Yahweh; cf. Deut. xxviii. 10; 2 Sam. xii. 28; Jer. vii. 10. David's conquests were wars of the Lord, 2 Sam. v. 19–23, xi. 11, xv. 24. James quotes the words from LXX, Acts xv. 16. Note the Greek version implies Adam for Edom, 'the remnant of men.'

These two verses may, of course, be the insertion of a later time. But there is only one reason for maintaining that they are, viz. the difficulty of thinking that the unrelieved gloom of Amos's forecasts could be thus relieved by the light at evening-time. There is nothing to hinder the prophet having seen in the future the completed ruins of Judah (cf. ii. 4, 5, iii. 1), and then, rising beyond that sad end, the restoration, the Messianic glory.

13. The closing oracle is, as Prof. G. A. Smith says, 'a very pleasant piece of music, as if the birds had come out after the thunderstorm, and the wet hills were glistening in the sunshine.'

plowman shall overtake the reaper. This indication of the teeming seasons is in the promise of Lev. xxvi. 5. Josephus also, (*Wars*, x. 8) describes this 'happy contention of the seasons' as characteristic of Galilee. But while Leviticus describes only very fruitful seasons, Amos describes a miracle, which points to spiritual rather than material fruit. So fertile would be the spiritual soil, so vast the harvest, that seed-time and harvest would fall always together. Ploughing was in October; sowing in November; barley and wheat were ripe in April-May; the vintage in August-September. When Jesus visited Samaria this took place, John iv. 35.

the treader of grapes: Judges ix. 27; Neh. xiii. 15; Isa. lxiii. 2, 3: cf. Jer. xxv. 30, xlviii. 33. This is the crowning act of the agricultural year, while the sower of the seed is the opener of the year; the two, the alpha and omega of the year's fruitfulness, flow into one.

the mountains shall drop, &c.: Joel i. 5, iii. 18. That Joel is the later appears from its more regular parallelism, and from its avoiding the unusual word for **melt** which occurs here, *tithmogagnah*. In Joel the hills flow with milk, but here they melt in

14 melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people
Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit
them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the
wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the
15 fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land,
and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land
which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

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fertilizing streams of living water and spiritual food. It is a hyperbole which is only justified by the metaphorical meaning.

This promise of blessing under the agricultural imagery is the more striking by contrast with the dearth in viii. 11–13.

14. bring again the captivity: i. e. lead back the captives, Hos. xi. 10, 11. Of course the phrase is common in the Exile: it occurs eleven times in Jeremiah; three in Ezekiel; in Deut. xxx. 3; Ps. cxxvi. 1, 4; Lam. ii. 14; Ps. xiv. 7, liii. 7; Zeph. ii. 7, iii. 20; some of these places show that it could occur before. So also Hos. vi. 11. Job xlii. 10 shows that it may have a metaphorical meaning, 'turn the fortune of a people,' and not refer to a 'captivity' in the literal sense.

vineyards . . . gardens: cf. v. 11; Deut. xxviii. 30, 33, 39.

15. After the promise of the gardens, the restored people are compared to trees themselves, trees planted, not to be plucked up, as in Ps. i. 3 (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 10; Jer. xxiv. 6, xlii. 10, xlv. 4; Hos. ii. 23).

thy God: this is rich in consolation, Isa. xli. 10, lii. 7, liv. 6, lxvi. 9.

It is curious to find Wellhausen and Nowack decisively saying that ix. 8–15 cannot be from the pen of Amos. 'After the keenest soaring of his faith,' says the former, 'shall he sink back lamely into the delusion which he fought against? Shall the illusion triumph over its destroyer, the God of one's wishes over the God of historical necessity? No, a later Jew has added this conclusion and destroyed the original, because it sounded too harsh in his ears.'

These writers seem to surrender the whole notion of a real voice of God speaking through the prophets, able therefore to state the paradoxes of the Divine judgement and mercy, beyond the reach of the mere historical observer.

Prof. G. A. Smith's conclusion, that the verses cannot be from Amos, because they are devoid of ethical meaning, and prophesy a restoration without repentance, and an earthly paradise instead of the reign of righteousness, is of course far more worthy of

consideration. But he seems too to temporarily forget the element of vision and of poetry in the work of a prophet. Amos was glowing with ethical earnestness, and following that impulse he described the inevitable ruin of the sinful nation; but then what more Divinely natural than that, his moral conclusions being reached, he should lift up his eyes and see, unreconciled, out of all connexion with what he knew, like distant mountains, misty and unreal in the golden light of evening, the miracle of God's mercy? The Lord would find a way of bringing back His banished ones, though Amos did not know it. He would rebuild and restore the hopeless ruins which alone the prophet's eye could see.

OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION

AND

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

OBADIAH

INTRODUCTION

THE introduction to the briefest book in the Old Testament should not be long. Pusey's tirade against those who do not accept the date, implied by the place of the book in the Canon, is as superfluous as it is interesting to the ordinary reader. Prof. Cheyne's minute analysis in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* is as repellent to the student of the Bible as it is necessary to the professional critic.

Obadiah means 'Servant of God,' and it is not an uncommon name in the O. T. (1 Kings xviii. 3–16; 1 Chron. iii. 21, vii. 3, viii. 38, ix. 16, 44, xii. 9, xxvii. 19; 2 Chron. xvii. 7, xxxiv. 12; Ezra viii. 9), though, as this list shows, it is, with the exception of Ahab's steward, a name which belongs to the later literature.

But this is all we know about the author of the book.

We are equally ignorant about the date. The book was probably inserted here in the Canon, because the prophecy in Amos ix. 12 is, according to this document, realized. The dates assigned vary by nearly six hundred years, from 889 B.C. (Hoffmann, Keil, who connect it with the narrative in 2 Chron. xxi. 8–16 belonging to the year 896 B.C.) to 312 B.C. (Hitzig and others).

The subject of the book is a denunciation of Israel's hereditary foe and neighbour, Edom, the descendants of Esau who lived in Mount Seir. The denunciation at the close passes into a general denunciation of other nations and a promise of victory to Israel.

The first part of the book (verses 1–14) is most naturally

referred to the fall of Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar broke up the Jewish State, 586 B.C. We know the conduct of Edom, verses 9–11, at that time, from other sources, e. g. Ps. cxxxvii; Lam. iv. 21, 22; Ezek. xxv. 8, 12, xxxv. The punishment which fell on the Edomites for their rejoicing over the fall of Israel at that time is referred to in Mal. i. 1–5, which belongs to the first half of the fifth century B. C., and forms a true counterpart to Obad. 1–7. Edom was evidently overrun, robbed, and driven from its borders by the surrounding Arabian tribes.

The second part of the book, verses 15–21, which is far less forceful and original in imagery and expression, points to a final punishment, yet in the future, in which Edom will only suffer as one of the nations that have been hostile to Israel.

But when we have thus fixed the date in the Exile or after, we are puzzled by finding the first five verses of our book in an *earlier prophet*, viz. in Jer. xlix. 14–16, 9, and in such a form and connexion that we are compelled to think Obadiah the more original. The explanation of this may be either (1) that Obadiah and Jeremiah both quote from an older author (so Ewald, Graf, &c.); or (2) that the passage in Jeremiah is much later than Jeremiah's time, and the quotation was inserted from our Book of Obadiah.

We may therefore for convenience' sake assume that Obadiah is a contemporary of Malachi or even later; and if we might rearrange the Canon, we should do well to place his book immediately before Malachi, and not just after Amos.

Though it is impossible to follow Pusey in his passionate defence of the date implied by the place of the book in the Canon, and while it is strange to see the ingenuity with which, in view of verse 20, he declares that, 'so far from writing among the exiles, Obadiah implies that the Captivity had not yet commenced,' it is a pleasure to

quote his analysis of the book, showing the connexion of thought: '(1) God had commanded nations to come against Edom, (2) determining to lower it; (3) it had trusted proudly in its strong position; (4) yet God would bring it down; and that (5) through no ordinary spoiler, but (6) by one who should search out its most hidden treasures; (7) its friends should be its destroyers; (8) its wisdom and (9) might should fail it, and (10) it should perish for its malice to its brother Jacob; the crowning act of which would be at the capture of Jerusalem; (11–14) but God's day was at hand, the heathen should be requited; (15–16) the remnant of Zion, being delivered, would dispossess their possessors, and would spread far and wide; (17–20) a Saviour should arise out of Zion, and the kingdom should be the Lord's (21).'

And Pusey's quotation from Hugo of St. Victor may put us on the track of deriving a true spiritual lesson from the little book: 'Obadiah is simple in language, manifold in meaning; few in words, abundant in thoughts, according to that "the wise man is known by the fewness of his words." He directeth his prophecy, according to the letter, against Edom; allegorically he inveighs against the world; morally against the flesh. Bearing an image of the Saviour, he hinteth at His coming through whom the world is destroyed, through whom the flesh is subdued, through whom freedom is restored.'

OBADIAH

THE vision of Obadiah.

Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom: We 1
have heard tidings from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, *saying*, Arise ye, and let us

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1. The title is, **The Vision of Obadiah.**

Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom introduces a quotation from an older prophet, the quotation used also by Jeremiah, xlix. 14–16, 7–9. Jeremiah, however, quotes it: 'I have heard.' Obadiah probably keeps to the original **We have heard**, the 'We' being prophet and people alike. We are able from Jeremiah to fix the quotation as far as verse 5. From 'We have heard' to 'gleaning grapes' should therefore be in inverted commas.

This quotation, threatening from of old the destruction of Edom, is given before the punishment, which followed on their ill-will to Israel in 586 B. C., is described. It is as if Obadiah wished to say: The harrying of Edom by the Arabs as a punishment for the violence done to Jacob is only the fulfilment of a doom long foretold; and the doom already fulfilled when Obadiah writes is only the prelude to the more complete and final fulfilment of that old prophecy.

Arise ye: Yahweh sent an ambassador to the neighbouring peoples to rouse them to form a confederacy against Edom (cf. Isa. xiii. 4 for the mustering of the nations). The hatred between Edom and Israel is typified in the story of Esau and Jacob. Edom occupied the mountainous strip, one hundred miles by twenty, which looked over the desert eastward and the Arabah westward. His rocky valleys were impregnable and fertile. His capital, Petra, was perched high up in the mountains, and very largely excavated out of the rocks. One picturesque feature of Petra is preserved in a famous prize poem:—

> 'Show me its equal save in Eastern clime,
> A rose-red city, half as old as time.'

He commanded the trade-routes, from the harbour of Akaba into which the gold-ships came from Ophir, and from Damascus to Gaza. He was therefore rich. He was like his ancestor Esau, wild and godless and worldly, caring only for material possessions. This brother estranged Israel hated. For a thousand years, from David, 1030 B. C., to John Hyrcanus, 130 B. C., who dragged the Idumaeans beneath the law, we find them in relentless strife. At the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar Edom exulted; and again at the

2 rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee
small among the nations: thou art greatly despised.
3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou
that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation
is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me
4 down to the ground? Though thou mount on high as
the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars,
5 I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. If
thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou
cut off!) would they not steal till they had enough? if

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fall of Jerusalem before the Roman armies certain implacable Edomites survived to exult. The Herods were Idumaeans, and they ruled and harried Israel up to the time of the Saviour, who came up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau.

While therefore there is in this prophecy no ethical or religious ground alleged for the eternal feud, and the bitter cry of exultation over Edom's calamity sounds essentially Pagan, a broader view of the case may justify the prophet's attitude. Israel stands in a sense for the ideals, the spiritual aspirations, the discipline, which prepared the world for Christ. Edom was expressed in that word applied to its king, 'Go thou and tell that fox.'

2. small. It was but a little nation always. But the smallness here is the result of defeat and subjection.

greatly: cf. Jer. xlix. 15.

3. rock: i. e. Sela, the Edomite capital, in Greek 'Petra.' Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* vi. 32) says the houses of the town were hewn out of the rock. And Jerome says that in the southern part of the country caves were used for dwellings, and subterranean dwellings were preferred because of the fierce heat of the sun. The traveller Schubert, contemplating the remains of these rocky dwellings, exclaims, 'Had then the ancient builders of these rock-works wings like the eagle, with which they raised themselves to those perpendicular precipices?'

4. It is Yahweh who decrees the punishment of the pride which defies Him.

I will bring thee down: cf. Amos ix. 2. The curious phrase in Heb., 'set thy nest,' in the infinitive, occurs in Balaam's prophecy, Num. xxiv. 21, and nowhere else.

5. till they had enough: the sense requires us to understand 'only till they had enough.' But these are no common thieves who are to accomplish the ruin of Edom; they will go on destroying when they have taken all the property they want, for

grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? How are *the things of* Esau searched 6
out! how are his hidden treasures sought up! All the 7
men of thy confederacy have brought thee on thy way,
even to the border: the men that were at peace with
thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee;
they that eat thy bread lay a snare under thee: there is
none understanding in him. Shall I not in that day, saith 8
the LORD, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and
understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy 9

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the sake of destroying; they are grape-gatherers who will leave no gleanings: cf. Jer. xlix. 9. The sense is made clear by verse 7. Verse 6 is a parenthesis. The former friends of Edom literally extrude them from their land of mountain fastnesses.

6. An exclamation, as if the prophet saw the raiding hosts penetrate into the remotest valleys and caves of Edom, dragging out men and treasure. It is more graphic in the brevity of the original: 'How are they searched out—Esau, his hidden treasures sought up!'

7. men of thy confederacy: not thieves or grape-gatherers, but their own familiar friends, viz. neighbouring nomadic tribes with which Edom had been in alliance, but which in this time of vengeance have made a raid upon him and completely vanquished him. This event connects itself with the general forward movement of the Arabian tribes in the sixth century. It is not, however, till 312 B.C. that we have historical notice of Petra being occupied, and then it was by the Nabathaeans, who were Aramaic and not Arabian (Diodorus, *Sic.* 19. 94). In Ps. lxxxiii. 7 the Arabic name 'Gebal' is used for Seir (Wellhausen).

to the border: not merely stealing a few things, like thieves, but ruthlessly ejecting the inhabitants of the land.

thy bread: not in LXX, probably inserted by an error in reading the letters of the previous word. It is simply: 'they lay a snare for thee.'

none understanding in him: viz. in Esau. It seems (cf. Jer. xlix. 7) that the Edomites prided themselves on their wits, probably attributing to their own ability the security which they had gained from their isolation and their mountain ramparts.

8. Hitherto the scene of Edom's humiliation has been described as if it were an accomplished fact. But we see from the future tense which now prevails that the events were only present to the prophet's eye. It is not necessary, though it is possible, with

mighty men; O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end
that every one may be cut off from the mount of Esau
10 by slaughter. For the violence done to thy brother
Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off
11 for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other
side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance,
and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon

Nowack, to regard verses 8, 9 as a quotation, like verses 1, 5, from an earlier prophecy. For destruction of the wise cf. Isa. xxix. 14.

9. For **Teman** see Amos i. 12. Eliphaz, the representative of human wisdom in Job (iv. 1), was a Temanite.

by slaughter. This word, says Nowack, belongs to the next verse (so LXX): 'for the slaughter and the violence done to the brother,' &c.

10. Here comes the central point of the book. The crowning vengeance against Esau is to come for his crowning outrage to his brother Jacob, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem in 586 B. C. Deut. xxiii. 7, 8 shows how Jacob ought to feel to Edom.

For (this use of the preposition translated 'for' belongs to the late Hebrew, Wellhausen) **the violence done to thy brother Jacob,** &c.: not only in the final fall of Jerusalem, but in former times; cf. Amos i. 11 and Num. xx. 14.

shame shall cover thee: cf. Mic. vii. 10.

11. This leaves no doubt that the fall of Jerusalem under the Chaldeans is meant, whether Obadiah saw it as an accomplished fact, or, according to Pusey's strange dogmatic conviction, foresaw it three centuries before the event[1].

stoodest on the other side: or rather, 'stoodest by,' i. e. without intervening; for the phrase cf. 2 Sam. xviii. 13; 2 Kings ii. 7; Ps. xxxviii. 11.

his substance. The word might mean the army, the military force; but from verse 13 it seems more likely to mean the treasures of Jerusalem. Isa. viii. 4, x. 14.

cast lots: see Joel iii. 3.

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[1] It is characteristic of Pusey that, when Ewald recognized the date of Obadiah as late, the Oxford scholar could see no motive for this interference with the traditional view which placed the book next to Amos in the Canon but unbelief and the dislike to admit the forecasts of prophecy! Pusey's method and spirit would to-day produce unbelief in Scripture. If Scripture is to be respected and believed, it must be treated with candour, an open mind, and a readiness to admit truth from whatever quarter it may come.

Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But look 12
not thou on the day of thy brother in the day of his
disaster, and rejoice not over the children of Judah in
the day of their destruction; neither speak proudly in
the day of distress. Enter not into the gate of my 13
people in the day of their calamity; yea, look not thou

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thou wast as one of them. This brief and bitter remark, 'Thou wast as one of the Chaldeans,' is more trenchant than if all the enormities of robbery, rape and murder had been enumerated.

12. This sudden change to the imperative, implying that the event had not yet happened, is very perplexing, and on it Pusey chiefly relies for arguing that Obadiah was only contemplating the ruin of Jerusalem centuries before. But how incredible that Obadiah should first forecast the cruel spite of the Edomites centuries before, and then proceed to forbid them to exhibit it, in verses 12–14! And though the words are in form addressed to Edom, we have no reason to think that the Hebrew prophet sent or spoke the words to the stranger. We cannot therefore think of him trying to 'dehort' Edom, as Pusey says, centuries before, from a course of proceedings which had not yet come within view. The difficulty is lessened, though not removed, if we connect the verses with what follows in verse 15. After seeing the actual outrages of Edom, the prophet exclaims: 'Do it not... do it not... for the day of the Lord is near.' And so our A. V. tried to twist the grammar and to render the imperative, 'Thou shouldest not have looked,' &c. Probably Wellhausen's suggestion is the best: he transposes the two clauses of verse 15. And thus the passage reads as a dramatic argument: 'Look not thou on the day of thy brother... enter not in the gate... stand thou not in the cross-way...,' i. e. better for thee if thou hadst not done this, for, 'as thou hast done it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head.' Then would follow the first clause of verse 15, 'For the day of the Lord is near.'

But look not. It is the usual Hebrew conjunction, and, as Wellhausen says, an imperative with *vau* could hardly occur without a previous imperative. He therefore transposes verses 12 and 13. But he also thinks verse 12 is a later insertion, a repetition of verse 13 in different words.

look not: viz. with pleasure; Ps. xxii. 17.

day of his disaster: *sc.* strangerhood; cf. Job xxxi. 3.

rejoice not: malignantly; Ps. xxxv. 19, 24, xxxviii. 16.

speak proudly: *lit.* 'make large thy mouth,' *sc.* with laughter (Ps. xxxv. 21; Isa. lvii. 4; Ezek. xxxv. 13).

on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither lay
ye *hands* on their substance in the day of their calamity.
14 And stand thou not in the crossway, to cut off those of
his that escape; and deliver not up those of his that
15 remain in the day of distress. For the day of the LORD
is near upon all the nations: as thou hast done, it shall
be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine
16 own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy moun-
tain, so shall all the nations drink continually, yea, they
shall drink, and swallow down, and shall be as though
17 they had not been. But in mount Zion there shall be

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13. lay ye hands. Ewald and Olshausen corrected the Heb. *tishlachnah* into *tishlach jad*, 'thou shalt not stretch out a hand.'

The threefold **in the day of their calamity** Wellhausen thinks suspicious.

14. the crossway: a word not elsewhere found. It should mean 'clearing'; LXX *diekbolé*, a pass between the mountains. It suggests that the Edomites occupied the defiles from Jerusalem to Jericho, and cut off any unhappy Jews who were trying to escape.

15. Here the prophecy widens and Edom only appears as a typical enemy of Yahweh, who is to be punished with the rest in the universal triumph of Israel. The remaining verses are by comparison with 1–14 somewhat tame and trite.

the day of the LORD: Joel i. 15, ii. 1, 31; for the Nemesis cf. Joel iii. 7.

all the nations: this widening of the eschatological outlook began in Ezekiel, whom doubtless Obadiah followed, as also did Joel (Ezek. xxxviii).

15^{b}. Edom's sins shall fall on his own head; cf. Ps. vii. 16.

16. as ye have drunk. The prophet turns and addresses the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The drinking is that of the cup of wrath (cf. Zech. xii. 2). As Yahweh had made His people suffer, so now He will punish the nations that were His instruments (cf. Jer. xxv).

shall . . . swallow down: so Keil, using a Syrian analogue; Delitzsch translated it 'speak error' (Job vi. 3; Prov. xx. 25); Wellhausen would correct the word from Lam. iv. 2, and translate 'reel.'

shall be as though, &c.: after drinking that cup of wrath they will be annihilated.

those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house 18
of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them: and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. And they of the South shall possess the 19
mount of Esau; and they of the lowland the Philistines: and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field

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17. those that escape: Joel iii. 5, iv. 17.

house of Jacob (Nahum ii. 2): not, then, only the men of Judah, but the whole family of Israel shall share in the glad restoration.

their possessions. The LXX reads, 'those who have disinherited them.'

18. house of Jacob... house of Joseph. The Northern Israelites are now in this fair vision of ultimate victory united with their Southern brethren (cf. Jer. xxxi. 18; Ezek. xxxvii. 16; Zech. x. 6). In Isa. xi. 13, &c. this united overthrowing of Edom is foretold.

The image of fire and stubble is common: Isa. i. 31, v. 24, x. 17, xxxiii. 14; Zech. xii. 6.

19. they of the South (the Negeb) . . . **they of the lowland** (the Shephelah). Wellhausen decides on grammatical grounds that the two phrases **the mount of Esau** and **the Philistines** are in apposition to the two other phrases, and are therefore interpolated. He will not admit that 'the Negeb' and 'the Shephelah' can be subjects. We must render therefore: 'And they, i. e. the victorious Jacob and Joseph, shall possess the Negeb, viz. the southern hills of Judah, which the Idumaeans in later times had occupied (Ezek. xxxv. 10); and the Shephelah, the south-western lowlands of Palestine, once occupied by the Philistines' (Joshua x. 40, xi. 2).

The Negeb had become part of **the mount of Esau,** Ezek. xxxv. 10, &c., xxxvi. 5; 1 Macc. iv. 29, 61, v. 65; and the Shephelah was overrun again by the Philistines when the Jews went into exile.

Prof. G. A. Smith keeps our R. V., 'The Negeb shall possess mount Esau, and the Shephelah the Philistines.' But then he goes to the LXX for the next clause, 'the mountain (i. e. the rest of Judah, outside the Negeb and the Shephelah) shall possess Ephraim and the field of Samaria.'

they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of

20 of Samaria: and Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead. And
the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, which
are *among* the Canaanites, *shall possess* even unto
Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in
21 Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South. And
saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the
mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the
LORD'S.

Samaria. Wellhausen is right in saying that the text must be corrupt. As it stands it only gives the tame promise that the restored exiles will reoccupy the old territory of the Northern Kingdom, Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin shall reappear (cf. Joshua xviii. 28, xv. 8, xviii. 16) to possess Gilead!

20. Wellhausen and Nowack despair of this verse. The exiles of the Northern Kingdom shall be settled again in the North, and those of the Southern Kingdom in the South, in this new Messianic time. So much for the general sense. But to get anything more, except by conjecture, is impossible.

the captivity of this host. It is impossible to say what this refers to.

which are among **the Canaanites** is meaningless, and there is no verb. Prof. G. A. Smith turns again to the LXX and obtains 'shall possess the land of the Canaanites unto Zarephath' (a town between Tyre and Zidon, 1 Kings xvii. 9).

the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad. We do not know what Sepharad is. Cheyne thinks it was Çparda of the Behistun Inscriptions, in Bithynia or Galatia, and says 'the language is quite consistent with a date in the Persian period.' Schrader thinks it was Šaparda of the Sargon Inscriptions, in Babylonia. If this latter were established we should know that Obadiah was among the exiles in Babylon, and spoke from that standpoint.

the cities of the South (Negeb): cf. for the cities of Judah there, Joshua xv. 21 ff.

21. saviours. The LXX reads 'those who were saved.' We may take the obscure language as the gleam of a Divine sunshine in a driving mist. As we are uncertain of the details in the resettlement of the exiles spoken of in verses 19, 20, so we are uncertain of the reference in the saviours who are to judge the mount of Esau. But the great word **the kingdom shall be the LORD'S,** closing the oracle which began 'the day of the Lord is near,' permits us to feel, if not to see, in the saying 'saviours

shall come up,' something more than a mere victorious army asserting the supremacy of Israel. This prophet too, dealing only with an age-long enmity and with a threatened judgement, is impelled by the prophetic spirit, and sees 'saviours' climbing mount Zion. It is hardly relevant to ask what he meant; but what he *saw* was the Saviour of the World, the Saviour who is judge, the Saviour of whom it is said by the latest of Biblical prophets, 'the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ.' Scientific exegesis sees nothing of this sort in these words; but we may venture to say it is there.

JONAH

INTRODUCTION

AND

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

JONAH

INTRODUCTION

THE little book of 'Jonah' touches the high-water mark of Old Testament theology. No other pre-Christian writer quite reaches the universalism which it implies. Yahweh, Israel's God, is seen as the God of the heathen too, concerned for the Assyrian, the most cruel and rapacious power in the world, calling a great pagan city to repentance, and accepting the signs of contrition. Meanwhile the Israelite is presented as shrinking from the missionary enterprise, and when his message of doom was delivered, bitterly annoyed because Yahweh in His mercy had spared the heathen. Here the prophetic message rises above the particularism of Israel, and God appears as the God of all flesh, calling all to repentance, willing to have mercy upon all.

There can therefore be no doubt about the religious and theological value of this book. And furthermore it teems with human interest: the action of the pagan sailors, and their conversion, are a beautiful study in soteriology, reminding us of the legend of St. Ursula. The great heathen city, and its docility and obedience to a prophetic message, are finely conceived. The very cattle joining in the penitence, and the Lord caring for the cattle as well as the innocent children, give a broad humanitarian atmosphere to the composition.

We cannot therefore wonder that Christ used the book on a memorable occasion in his teaching, nor that it was the means of the conversion of Cyprian, concerning whom

Jerome tells us that when he was a gay and thoughtless noble, 'sermonem Ionae audiisse et ad Deum conversum.'

When, however, we examine the form in which this theological truth has been conveyed to us, the traditional view, which Pusey vehemently defended, that the book was written by Jonah himself, who is mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25, and that it is inserted here in the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* as a writing of the time of Jeroboam II, contemporary with Hosea and Amos, finds no internal support. There is no hint that Jonah is the writer, nor is there any utterance of Jonah recorded in the book, except the Psalm in ch. ii which cannot be his, and the announcement in iii. 4 which bears no autographic stamp. The book is not in any way similar to the prophetic writings of Hosea and Amos, which, though they contain brief historical narratives, are in the main prophetic utterances vouched for by the speakers, but it is a narrative pure and simple, which professes to recount an event of long ago. Indeed the Hebrew expression in iii. 3, 'Nineveh was an exceeding great city,' implies that it had been, but had now ceased to be. And as Nineveh fell and was practically destroyed in 606 B.C., we are at any rate carried down to a date a century and a half after the historic Jonah Ben-Amittai. On the other hand, the form of the narrative reminds us of the legendary history of Elijah and Elisha which is incorporated in the Book of Kings. We may therefore, with Prof. Budde, regard the book as a Midrash to the Book of Kings (cf. 2 Chron. xxiv. 27). A Midrash is defined by Prof. Driver as 'an imaginative development of a thought or theme suggested by Scripture, especially a didactic or homiletic exposition or an edifying religious story.' Tobit and Susanna are Midrashim properly left outside the Canon, Jonah is a Midrash properly included in it.

Prof. Driver does not doubt that tradition recorded a visit of Jonah to Nineveh. Jonah prophesied to Jero-

boam, or his predecessor, that the border of Israel should be restored from Hamath to the Arabah. And that restoration was rendered possible by the incursions made into Syria by the Assyrian kings, Shalmaneser III (782–773) and Assurdam III (772–754). The power of Damascus was crippled by these calamities, and Israel seized the opportunity to expand. The historical Jonah had therefore a direct interest in Nineveh; and it is conceivable that he journeyed to the great city with a call of repentance from Yahweh.

The author of our book, however, did not depend on tradition. He was at liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to shape his story with a view to edification. He composed such events as would best illustrate the truths which he wished to convey, precisely in the same way that our Lord composed his parables. The modern dragoman points out the house of the Good Samaritan! It is equally gratuitous to cite historical support for the Book of Jonah. The story is composed with a purpose; the purpose is what we are concerned with; the story is merely a vehicle.

When did the writer live and write? The only indications for settling that question are to be found in the style and in the references. He quotes Joel ii. 14 (Jonah iii. 9), and we have seen reason to put Joel very late in the line of prophets. It seems also more than probable that the whole story of the great fish is a development of Jer. li. 34, 44. Prof. Cheyne thinks that the combination of allegory and myth, which he sees in the story, is best explained by this striking parallel in the great prophet.

Then the style belongs to the later Hebrew. The words and forms conclusive of a post-exilic date must be cited, *shathak* (i. 12), *keriah* (iii. 2), *ta-am* (iii. 7), *'amal*, 'to labour' (iv. 10), *ribbo* (iv. 11), *minnah* (ii. 1, iv. 6, 7), *beshelmi* (i. 7), *beshelli* (i. 12), *shebin* (iv. 10). Prof. Driver also cites as marks of a later age *sephinah* (i. 5), *hith-*

ashsheth (i. 6), in the sense of 'to think,' found elsewhere only in the Aramaic of Dan. vi. 4 and the Targums.

Prof. G. A. Smith considers the style shows most affinity with Ezra and Nehemiah. This would bring the date of the book to the beginning of the third century B.C., in time for it to be included in the Canon of the Prophets, which was closed about 200 B.C. (Ecclus. xlix. 10).

When the character and the date of the book are thus determined we are relieved from Pusey's laboured attempts to vindicate the historical veracity of the narratives. It is humiliating for a commentator to collect doubtful stories of sailors swallowed by sharks and vomited out alive. Mr. Frank Bullen's account of the cachalot whale shows conclusively that the sea contains a fish which could swallow a man without injuring him. And such facts would give colour to our author's narrative. But we are engaged on quite the wrong line of defence when we attempt to defend the Book of Jonah in that way. The story of the whale and that of the rapidly growing gourd are to be ranked with the story of the lions and the trees of the land of Beulah in the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

And directly we recognize the nature of the book we see at once that everything reminds us that we are not dealing with historical material. The name of the Ninevite king is not given; the suddenness of the conversion of Nineveh would be hard to authenticate in view of Nahum's terrific oracle against it; and Jonah is left seated there in face of the spared city; is it conceivable that a historical writer would omit to tell us how the Lord's rebuke affected him? But these very points are all consistent with the nature and scope of Midrash: the facts are composed to illustrate the truth, and the truth established, the facts may fall away.

The Psalm, too, in ch. ii confirms this view. It is clearly inserted. Verse 10 follows immediately verse 1. The writer inserted this Psalm for edification. It is composed of several passages from the Psalter, but no

part of it is appropriate to the situation in 'the fish's belly.' It is rather a thanksgiving for deliverance already accomplished, and the details refer to a man nearly drowned in the depths of the sea, with the seaweeds wrapped about his head, and not to one in the extraordinary position of Jonah.

Prof. Cheyne interprets the allegory of the book in the light of Jer. li. 34, 44. Jonah represents Israel; the whale is Babylon, which swallows Israel in the Exile, but restores him in due time. This is rather frigid, like the attempts to allegorize the *Idylls of the King*. May not an inspired writer tell a story in his own way with its obvious message? Directly we dismiss the distracting necessity of defending the events as facts, and give our attention to the story merely for the lessons it contains, we read a far more instructive homily than if it were a perfunctory myth seeking to describe the Exile, for which there was no adequate reason moral or spiritual.

The story gives its own moral: the impossibility of evading the Divine purpose; the natural piety of men who know not the true religion; the power of God to deliver; the desire of God to bring all to repentance; the readiness of God to forgive the penitent; the rebuke to a prophet who is more concerned with the establishment of His word than with the saving of men; the humanity of God who cares for men and babes and cattle. These are truths which are never out of date. They were preached in this brief pictorial sermon by a man of genius; and the little book will be read and loved as long as men have childlike hearts, and can defy the mordant tooth of a soulless criticism.

With regard to the historic Jonah, we may add that his birthplace and reputed tomb place him very near to the scenes of our Lord's childhood. A mile south of Kefr Kenna (Cana) is Jiftah, a corruption of Gath-hepher (2 Kings xiv. 25), and on a neighbouring hill tradition places Jonah's tomb.

Jesus of Nazareth would think of Jonah as a fellow countryman, and would read the book about him in the sacred Canon with a double interest, finding in it the forecast of his world-wide mission, and the symbol of his death and resurrection.

JONAH

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son 1
of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, 2
and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up
before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish 3
from the presence of the LORD; and he went down to

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i. **1.** All that we know of the historic Jonah is contained in 2 Kings xiv. 25. See Introduction. The name means 'a dove.' Gath-hepher, where the prophet lived, was in Zebulon, later Galilee of the Gentiles. He lived, as it were, on the highway of the nations, and the doings of the great world-power at Nineveh would readily reach his ears. The opening of the book, which is in the Hebrew, 'And the word of the Lord came to Jonah,' suggests that it was once part of a larger whole, a Midrash to 2 Kings xiv. 25 (Budde), or a chapter written for the *Book of the Twelve Prophets* (Smend). But 1 Samuel, Ruth, and Ezra all begin with the simple conjunction in the same way.

2. that great city. In the Hebrew 'the great city.' The vastness of the city lived in story long after its fall, Gen. x. 12; Strabo xvi. 1. 3; Diod. ii. 3. Its cruelty and bloodshed are recorded in its own histories and bas-reliefs; cf. Nahum ii. 11, 12.

come up. Yahweh sits in the heavens.

3. Why did Jonah shirk the mission? Because his heart told him that God was so merciful that He would forgive and not execute His wrath on Nineveh, iv. 2.

Tarshish. Tartessus in Spain, on the Baetis (Guadalquivir); Gen. x. 4; Ps. xlvii. 7; Jer. x. 9; Ezek. xxviii. 12, 25: as far west as he could get, when he was ordered to go east.

Joppa (Acts ix. 36): to-day Jaffa[1], the only tolerable port on the coast of Palestine (Joshua xix. 46; Ezra iii. 7).

from the presence: i. e. out of the holy land where Yahweh dwelt (cf. Gen. iv. 14; 1 Sam. xxvi. 19; 2 Kings xvii. 20, 23). So Wellhausen and Nowack. But this rather primitive idea would hardly occur in so late a book as Jonah. And as Pusey

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[1] It was here that Andromeda, in the Greek myth, was chained. And the monster which Perseus slew is by mythologists naturally connected with Jonah's whale.

Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid
the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them
4 unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. But the
LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was
a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to
5 be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried
every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares
that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them.
But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of
6 the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the ship-
master came to him, and said unto him, What meanest
thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that
7 God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they

urges, the phrase is not 'from the presence,' but 'from before the face of,' which may mean the standing before God as His servant to receive His messages (cf. 1 Kings xviii. 15, Elijah says: 'The Lord of hosts . . . before whom I stand'). So Cain fled from before the presence of the Lord when he ceased to be the obedient servant of God. This is the interpretation of Aben Ezra.

with them: *sc.* the crew and passengers of the ship. It would be a Phoenician ship. Israel never, except in the ideal allotments of Joshua, got down to the sea. In historic times the coasts were all occupied by Philistines, Phoenicians, or other Canaanites, just as Wales and Cornwall were held by the fugitive Britons who were beaten back by the advancing Saxons.

4. sent out: rather, 'cast.'

was like to be: *lit.* 'thought to be broken,' as if the ship had life and shuddered at her threatened doom.

5. The sailors were, like sailors now, of many nationalities, and superstitious, if not religious.

to lighten it unto them: it is 'to lighten from upon them,' i. e. to lighten the burden which weighed them down. Thus their wealth was lost through Jonah's sin, though their lives were saved through Jonah's penitence. It is impossible to sin against God and not injure some one somehow.

innermost parts: cf. Ezek. xxxii. 23; Amos vi. 10. The word here for **ship,** *sephinah*, is Aramaic and Arabic.

6. shipmaster: master of the ropesmen (in Ezekiel, 'pilots'), a picturesque name for a captain (Ezek. xxvii. 8, 27-29).

will think upon us. The Aramaic word may be compared with that in Dan. vi. 4. The captain did not recognize Jonah as

said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then 8
said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am 9
an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were 10
the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told

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a prophet or an Israelite, but only as a man who like the rest must have a tutelary deity to whom to pray.

7. Jonah has come up to the deck with the captain. When the storm continues, the idea occurs to superstitious minds that some one—surely that passenger sleeping below—must be guilty. This, of course, is a natural device for a story-teller, but is not paralleled by anything we know of ancient seafaring. The community of those who go down to the sea in ships could hardly survive if every storm demanded a victim from among themselves.

for whose cause: the word is Aramaic, belonging only to the later language.

8. for whose cause this evil is upon us. This was unnecessary, as the lot had decided. The Hebrew words are curious. In many codices they are wanting. We may safely treat them as a gloss on verse 7, which crept into the text.

9. Jonah does not tell his occupation. Shame holds his tongue. His nationality is Hebrew (so Gen. xl. 15; Exod. ii. 7, iii. 18, &c.).

I fear the LORD. The danger, as so often, has revived the religious sense. Jonah to these heathen shipmen witnesses a good confession: while the magnificent designation of his God strikes terror into their breasts. Such a God—and His servant disobeying—no wonder He is wroth!

10. What is this? not a question but an expression of horror; cf. Gen. iii. 13.

because he had told them: a later addition (Wellhausen, Nowack).

11 them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto
thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea
12 grew more and more tempestuous. And he said unto
them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so
shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my
13 sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the
men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they
could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous
14 against them. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and
said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us
not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us
innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it

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11. These pagan sailors appear in an agreeable light. They appreciate Jonah's candour and penitence, and are sufficiently impressed by him to ask him to fix his own doom. Their effort to save him from it, in verse 13, is a credit to unenlightened humanity. The theory of total depravity does not hold as we learn more of the benevolence which exists even among savages. See Prince Krapotkin's *Mutual Aid*. It is said, for instance, that the Hottentots were kindly to one another before their contact with Europeans; and the Zulus and Kaffirs, uncontaminated by contact with the whites, have virtues which we might well pray for; cruelty to children and impurity are not found among them.

may be calm unto us: *lit.* 'may become quiet from upon us,' as if it were towering up and crashing down on their decks in ruin.

grew more and more: *lit.* 'went on,' might we say 'ran high,' a Hebrew idiom; cf. Prov. iv. 18 (where the phrase is otherwise rendered) and 1 Sam. ii. 26; 2 Sam. iii. 1, xv. 12.

12. for my sake: another late Aramaic form.

13. rowed: *lit.* 'dug,' i. e. ploughed the sea. The sails were by now useless, torn to shreds, the mast gone by the board. They made a final effort with the oars.

grew more and more: verse 11, 'ran high.'

14. The pagans began at once to pray to Yahweh, Jonah's God, that He might not punish them for putting Jonah to death as they now felt bound to do. The conversion to the worship of Yahweh is sudden.

innocent blood. They believe him on his own confession to be guilty. But if he had misled them they might incur the wrath of Heaven for punishing the innocent; Joel iv. 19.

hast done as it pleased thee: by the lot; 1 Sam. iii. 18.

pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him 15
forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.
Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly; and they 16
offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. And 17
the LORD prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah;
and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and
three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his 2
God out of the fish's belly. And he said, 2

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16. When the sea grew calm their conversion was complete. They became worshippers of Yahweh and offered sacrifices to Him at once. Thus Jonah's penitence had immediately, at his own cost, accomplished a missionary end *in partibus infidelium.*

17. a great fish. The species is not designated. The cachalot whale, which has been seen in the Mediterranean, can easily swallow a man, or even a small boat. Sharks have swallowed men and vomited them out alive. Keil tries to show by instances that this is possible. Pusey denounces all who deny it as infidels. Orelli tries to diminish the wonder of the three days and three nights by showing that it only means 'over twenty-four hours.' But no one who reads these ingenious apologies for the miracle can feel that real faith is established by such precarious parallels. If there were solid reason for thinking that we were here dealing with a historical narrative, or an autograph writing of Jonah Ben-Amittai, we should simply have to say that the miracle was a signal act of the Divine interposition; and while a godless science would reject the story, the devout believer would accept it among the mysteries of faith, as millions have done for all these Christian centuries. But a searching criticism has relieved us from a great embarrassment. It is now plain that the Midrash is not narrative of fact, but a story with striking incidents composed to illustrate a religious message. The great fish no longer needs to be determined. How a man could live in its belly for three days has no longer to be explained. These are but the apparatus, the imaginative apparatus, of a Divine truth. God knows how to deliver His erring servants: the seas cannot devour them, the grave cannot hold them. In Him they live and move and have their being. How the form of the story may have been derived from Jer. li. 34, 44 is shown in the Introduction.

ii. 1. Originally, it is evident, verse 10 followed immediately on verse 1, for the prayer in verses 2–9 is not a prayer for deliverance at all, but a thanksgiving after it has been accomplished. It is

I called by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD,
And he answered me;
Out of the belly of hell cried I,
And thou heardest my voice.

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astonishing how Pusey can think he serves the cause of truth by ignoring this, and by suggesting that Jonah was first thrown into the depths of the sea, where the weeds were wrapt about his head, and then he was, as it were, rescued by the fish swallowing him! This borders on the grotesque, and reminds us of the verse:—

'A lady bathing on the beach
Was carried far beyond her reach;
A shark, attracted by the sound,
Just saved the girl from being drowned.'

It is a far truer reverence which shrinks from these harmonistic absurdities, and frankly recognizes that the prayer of Jonah is a cento of passages from the Psalms, put into his mouth, perhaps by a later hand, like the prayer of Hannah in the book of Samuel.

2. I called. It is evident that the experience is a past one; this is the thanksgiving for a deliverance accomplished. It will be equally evident that the experience was not that of being in a fish's belly, to which there is no reference in the prayer, but that of being plunged into the depths of the sea, **the belly of hell,** 'the pit.' The references also to the temple show that the words come from the Southern Kingdom, and from the circle in which the temple was the acknowledged centre of the cultus. In Jonah's time the Northern Kingdom was cut off from it; Israel's religious centre was Beth-el (Amos vii. 13). But while the prayer is not appropriate to the belly of the fish, and is a cento of ideas and phrases found in the Psalms, it is in itself a beautiful and helpful outpouring of a pious soul that has escaped a terrible danger; while the whole book is rich in religious teaching, this passage is a real addition to the literature of devotion. It may have been composed by the author of the book, and inserted later; but that is not probable, he would have placed the thanksgiving after the deliverance. More probably a later prophet or Psalmist, missing the substance of Jonah's prayer, composed this little song and inserted it between 'out of the fish's belly' and 'And the Lord spake unto the fish.'

The first clause of the verse recalls Pss. xviii. 6, 7, cxx. 1.

the belly of hell. Sheol is thought of as a person, like the Greek Hades; cf. Isa. v. 14, where Sheol has a mouth and a desire. The deliverance from Sheol echoes Ps. xxx. 3.

For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart 3
of the seas,
And the flood was round about me;
All thy waves and thy billows passed over me.
And I said, I am cast out from before thine 4
eyes;
Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; 5
The deep was round about me;
The weeds were wrapped about my head.
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; 6

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3. For thou didst. It is really 'And thou didst' with *vau* consecutive. It is not a continuation of verse 2; probably, as Wellhausen conjectures, a verse has fallen out, perhaps some such thought as, 'I sinned against thee, I deserved thy punishment, and thou didst cast me,' &c.

heart of the seas: a phrase borrowed from Ezek. xxvii. 4, 25.

the flood: *Nahar* is usually a river, and especially the Nile. But it refers to other waters too, e. g. Ps. xxiv. 2.

all thy waves, &c., is from Ps. xlii. 7.

4. This first clause is taken from Ps. xxxi. 22, with the exception of a ש for a ך, which turns 'I am cut off' into **I am cast out.**

Yet. Nowack suggests, unnecessarily, *eik* for *ek*, 'How shall I look again?' Unnecessarily, because there is 'a budding morrow in midnight,' and the believing soul in its darkest moment yet believes to see the salvation of the Lord.

5. The waters compassed me: cf. Ps. xviii. 4 and lxix. 1.

The deep is *Tehom*, the mythical deep referred to in Gen. i. 2.

The weeds. As the seaweed grows at the bottom of the sea, says Nowack, this shows how deep he was plunged. Does it? Is not seaweed often floating in the mid-depths and even on the surface of the sea? The suggestion is not of the depth but of entanglement and the consequent difficulty of rising to the surface again. Wellhausen rightly points out how inappropriate this would be to the condition inside the fish.

6. This beautiful verse is original; for its first clauses we have no exact parallel, and it makes us wish that the poet had more frequently trusted his genius. It is a Miltonic thought, that the drowning man was carried to the roots of the mountains in the

The earth with her bars *closed* upon me for ever:
Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.
7 When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD:
And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.
8 They that regard lying vanities
9 Forsake their own mercy.
But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay that which I have vowed.
Salvation is of the LORD.

---

vast deep, and that there he was held down under the grill of the earth, like a prisoner thrust into the lowest dungeon.

closed **upon me**: rather, 'were behind me.'

hast thou brought up my life echoes Ps. xxx. 3.

the pit usually means the grave, and may be metaphorical; but it may be applied to the watery depths.

7. The first clause is from Ps. cxlii. 3 (marg.), cxliii. 4; the second from Ps. xviii. 6, and v. 7. The reference to the temple at Jerusalem is as impossible in the historic Jonah as it was to David before the temple was built. Ps. xviii. 6 and v. 7 obviously belong to the later period when Solomon had built the temple, and our prayer here obviously comes from a pious soul of the Southern Kingdom.

8. lying vanities: i. e. idols (Deut. xxxii. 21). The idea is in Ps. xxxi. 6. This would be rather inappropriate on Jonah's lips, when the heathen had just been saved through their piety.

their own mercy: a designation of Yahweh; so in Ps. cxliv. 2 he is called 'My lovingkindness' (the same word in the Hebrew). The whole verse is unsuitable to the situation of Jonah; but curiously apposite if we see in the fish a symbol of the Captivity, and in Jonah a symbol of Israel banished into exile, in order to learn to put aside idols for ever. Prof. G. A. Smith treats the episode as an allegory with this meaning.

9. the voice of thanksgiving: cf. Ps. xlii. 4. For the payment of the vow made in straits, to be fulfilled in deliverance, Ps. l. 14, 23.

'Salvation is Yahweh's' is the conclusion of the hymn.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out 10
Jonah upon the dry land.

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the 3
second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great 2
city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.
So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to 3
the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding
great city, of three days' journey. And Jonah began to 4
enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said,
Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And 5

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10. This verse follows verse 1.

the dry land: *sc.* the coast of Palestine from which the ship had started.

The parallel to the Lord's resurrection is deeper than the fact of a three days' entombment. Jonah saved the ship by voluntarily dying; so Christ laid down his life and took it again. Those he saved were not Jews only but Phoenicians, pagans, the world.

iii. **1. the second time.** Jonah has learnt obedience by suffering. The phrase of i. 2 is repeated. Then the command was rejected, now it is accepted in humility.

3. was. This past tense in the Hebrew implies that the writer is living at a time when Nineveh had ceased to be, i. e. after 606 B. C.

exceeding great: *lit.* 'great to God' (the name of Israel's God, Yahweh, is not here employed nor in iv. 7 following), i. e. great even in His judgement.

of three days' journey. It is clear from verse 4 that the writer understood the city to have been three days' journey in diameter. Orelli's idea that the journey was lengthened by zig-zagging through the several markets will satisfy no one; for the phrase ceases then to designate the size altogether. But our author, writing long after the destruction of Nineveh, took the traditional description of the circuit of Nineveh, sixty miles, approximately three days' journey (Diodorus, ii. 3), to mean that it was sixty miles in diameter. But Diodorus, and Herodotus (v. 53) assure us that it was one day's journey across, twenty miles.

4. forty days: LXX has 'three days.' If we were reading a historical description the narrative would be full of difficulties. A strange prophet announced the impending destruction as he travelled through the vast city for one day, and the huge population immediately believed and repented. The king, who is not named, heard, and put on sackcloth, sitting in ashes. If this were

the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed
a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them
6 even to the least of them. And the tidings reached the
king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid
his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and
7 sat in ashes. And he made proclamation and published
through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his
nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock,
8 taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but

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history, Jonah did what no prophet, what no apostle, what Christ himself never did. Never did a day's preaching bring a vast strange city to repentance. But we repeat, this is not history, it is a story with a meaning, an allegory; it is the great announcement that God cares for the heathen world, and calls it to repentance, and that whenever men anywhere repent, His compassion is kindled towards them. Suppose the writer is writing history, and the narrative loses its spiritual power because it becomes incredible; recognize that he is clothing a great truth in a pictorial form, and the truth is carried straight home to heart and conscience, just because it is 'truth embodied in a tale.'

shall be overthrown. The ruins of Nineveh, discovered by Layard, are a world's wonder. Opposite Mosul on the right bank of the Tigris are two mounds, Kujundschik, and Nebi Yunus (i. e. Prophet Jonah). Between these, covering an area nine miles round, are the ruins of the city. 'Upon terraces and substructions of enormous breadth rose storied palaces, arsenals, barracks, libraries, and temples. The walls were so broad that chariots could roll abreast on them' (Prof. G. A. Smith). But the Nineveh which Jonah is supposed to have entered included leagues of buildings, adjoining cities, and walled country (Gen. x. 11) extending over an area sixty miles in circumference. Our author says nothing of the buildings and the glory of the city; he sees only the living things, the men and the cattle.

5. Orelli accounts for the wonder of the Ninevites understanding Jonah, by referring to Isa. xxxvi. 11. But in a story difficulties of this kind are ignored.

fast, and . . . sackcloth: cf. Joel i. 13.

6. robe: or 'mantle,' the same word as in Joshua vii. 21 (R.V. marg.), 'mantle of Shinar.'

sat in ashes: Job ii. 8.

7. For the Jewish notion of these absolute decrees of Eastern kings see Dan. iii. 10, 29.

let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knoweth whether God will not 9
turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that 10
they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he 4

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8. man and beast. If we are not to treat these words, with Wellhausen, as an insertion, we are to conceive the cattle put into mourning to show sympathy with men (cf. iv. 11). And this is in harmony with Oriental thought and practice; cf. Joel i. 18 for the sympathy of beasts with men, and Herod. ix. 24, where in the mourning for Masistius the people shore off not only their own hair but also that of the horses and other beasts of burden (cf. Virg. *Ecl.* v. 1; *Aen.* xi. 89). But when we read on, **let them cry mightily**, we see the force of Wellhausen's suggestion.

9. Who knoweth: from Joel ii. 14.

10. God saw. The use of Elohim for Yahweh would in an earlier writing indicate different sources. But when our book was written the names were used interchangeably. So in iv. 6, 'Yahweh Elohim.'

repented of the evil: as He did at Amos's prayer (Amos vii. 3), and at Moses' (Exod. xxxii. 14). But here the prophet does not intercede for the guilty; on the contrary, he is deeply aggrieved that God hears the cry of repentance.

It will be observed that verses 6–9 seem out of place. The people had put on sackcloth before the king commanded it, verse 6. The discrepancy is, however, only due to the fact that the author is creating the story and not recording facts.

iv. **1. it displeased Jonah:** the phrase of Neh. ii. 10, xiii. 8. Jonah's grief is not that of wounded *amour propre*, but a patriotic indignation that Israel's foes should be spared. To learn to rejoice in the pardon of one's enemies, and aliens, is to go further than the Old Testament, and to reach the New. Even Jeremiah exclaimed, 'Lord, Thou hast deceived me!' when his word was reversed by circumstances. The Book of Jonah has anticipated the days of the Son of Man when it condemns Jonah for this limited religion of patriotism and demands that he should rejoice in the pardon and salvation of any men.

2 was angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said,
I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was
yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto
Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and
full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy,
3 and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O LORD,
take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for
4 me to die than to live. And the LORD said, Doest thou
5 well to be angry? Then Jonah went out of the city, and
sat on the east side of the city, and there made him
a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see
6 what would become of the city. And the LORD God
prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah,
that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him

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2. hasted to flee: it is a Hebrew idiom, 'I was before to flee.' Nowack says it only means here, 'I fled before to Tarshish.'

a gracious God: this is from Joel ii. 13.

3. This prayer for death brings the Midrash of Jonah into close connexion with the similar Midrash of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4), and reminds us that they belong to the same circle of literature.

better for me to die: Gen. xxvii. 46.

4. Doest thou well: rather, the Heb. use of *heiteb* is adverbial, strengthening the verbal idea, as in Deut. ix. 21, xiii. 15. 'Art thou very angry?' It is a gentle bantering, a rallying of a sulky mind, as Prof. G. A. Smith says.

5. Jonah withdraws indignant to watch from the side of the sunrise what he still hopes may be the fulfilment of his fell denunciation. The 'booth' might well be, as at the Feast of Booths, so loose an arbour of leaves and boughs that it would not screen him from the vertical sun.

6. *The miracle of the Gourd.* Jonah is to learn by his regret for the withering of a useful plant how much more his compassion should be kindled for conscious beings, even children and cattle.

the LORD God: from Gen. ii. 4.

prepared: i. 17, also iv. 7, 8; a late word.

gourd: *kikor*; LXX, *colycuthé*. It is the *Ricinus* (Jerome), a shrub common in Palestine, which grows with extraordinary rapidity in a sandy soil. Its broad leaves give a good shelter. The name used here, and in Greek, *kiki* (Herod. ii. 94; Plin. xv. 7) was from Egypt. The familiar name is *Palma Christi*.

from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the 7
morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, 8
that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest 9
thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death. And the LORD said, 10
Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast

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to deliver him from his evil case: probably a gloss. For it is not mentioned that he was suffering from the heat until later on, verse 8. His evil case was the frustration of his prophecy. It would be too great a refinement to say that the gourd delivered him from his evil case by opening his eyes and touching his heart with pity for living things: yet that would be the only meaning which would justify the words here. Wellhausen remarks that the sitting under the gourd is perhaps an imitation of Elijah in his discouragement under the juniper.

7. The sudden withering is, of course, miraculous as the sudden growth, though the *Ricinus* in any case grows quickly, and a blight may as quickly destroy it.

8. sultry. The Hebrew word here is unknown. 'I know not how to expound or to emend it,' says Wellhausen. On the other hand, as Nowack says, its meaning is clear, 'glowing hot.'

east wind: the Sherghi, Sherki, or Scirocco.

beat upon: the construction is not found elsewhere in the Hebrew; 'smite' is enough without 'upon.' Ps. cxxi. 6; Isa. xlix. 10.

fainted: the same as Amos viii. 13.

requested: this is imitated from 1 Kings xix. 4.

9. 'Art thou so very angry about the gourd?' see verse 4.

even unto death: it recalls Gethsemane, Matt. xxvi. 38.

10. had pity on the gourd: as if Jonah had felt a sentimental regret in the sudden decay of the useful plant. This also shows the rather free movement of thought in the story-maker. Jonah was only very angry, apparently, because he lost the grateful shade. But the argument is very fine: 'So moved about a gourd which came, the son of a night'—that is the literal Hebrew—'and perished, the son of a night, with the making of which you had

not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in
11 a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have
pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than
sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between
their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

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no concern; and shall not God have pity on these creatures made in His image, into which He breathed His breath—flowers of His heart are they?' The story, as a story, may halt, but the spiritual lesson never falters.

11. sixscore thousand: 120,000 persons who cannot tell right hand from left, that would mean children under two years old. As such commonly form but one-tenth of a population, we suppose Nineveh to contain 1,200,000 people. The cattle also are the Lord's, and He cares for them.

This sudden conclusion of the book is very impressive. We hear no more of Jonah or of the tale, which have served the purpose as the vehicle of the truth. We are left with the great thought that God pities and God cares for the vast populations of all heathen cities, and even for the dumb creatures which serve them. Again Jonah anticipates Christ; cf. Matt. vi. 10–34. The author of a little book called *From the Abyss* has summoned this passage to give us hope for the vast, obscure, shifting, meaningless, purposeless sea of humanity that floods a modern city, like London. The only comfort is, God knows and cares for each. It is an illustration of the vital power of the Word of God that this little book avails in this late and terrible situation.

MICAH

INTRODUCTION

AND

REVISED VERSION WITH ANNOTATIONS

MICAH

INTRODUCTION

SINCE criticism began, with Ewald, to question the unity of this little book, it has raged with increasing violence, until Prof. Cheyne, improving on Robertson Smith in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, concludes: 'in no part of ch. iv–vii can we venture to detect the hand of Micah.'

It is true that the value of the book does not depend on the authorship of Micah. If it had originally been attributed to several prophets at different periods its teaching would have been equally drastic and conclusive. But something is due to tradition; we are certainly justified in retaining the integrity of a book of Scripture, unless conclusive reasons can be advanced against it. And those who have recently written the fullest monographs on the subject, Wildeboer, Von Ryssel, and Elhorst, incline, as Prof. G. A. Smith says, to believe in the genuineness of the book as a whole.

We shall do well, therefore, to assume that these very diverse utterances were delivered by Micah the Morashtite within the dates assigned by i. 1, viz. 740–700 B.C., except where clauses or passages are conclusively shown to come from a later date or from another hand.

Micah overlaps Hosea, as Hosea overlaps Amos, and he is a contemporary of Isaiah, though he began later and ended earlier than the great prophet of the court and the

capital[1]. His was a voice from the country-side. Moresheth was a small town in the maritime plain, near Gath (i. 14).

To begin with, chs. i–iii, with the exception of ii. 12, 13, form the undisputed work of this country-prophet (see Jer. xxvi. 17–19, where the prophet quotes his predecessor). Here is the veritable Micah; and criticism has to decide whether chs. iv–vii can be ascribed to the writer of this indisputable section. Let us analyse the three chapters. i. 2–4 is a picture of the Theophany. Yahweh comes down to judge Israel and Judah; i. 5–8, Samaria is destroyed, but the judgement (i. 9) reaches even to Judah and Jerusalem; i. 10–16 describes the march of the foe, the Assyrian, especially through the Shephelah and the towns in the neighbourhood of Moresheth-gath, which Micah had known from his boyhood. This dwelling on the local effects of the invasion, a little out of proportion with the rest, gives peculiar vividness and reality to the countryman's view of things: to him Jerusalem was a distant, and almost alien, centre of fashion, luxury, vice, and oppression.

ii. 1–11 describes the powerful and wealthy people whose misdeeds bring this judgement upon the nation. They will not listen to threats of judgement, secure in the privileges of the chosen people. Whoso rebukes their vices they reject. The only prophet they will listen to is the brewer and the distiller (verse 11).

ii. 12–13 is an insertion of a promise of a grand

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[1] How conscious of his contemporary Micah was, the following comparisons show :—

Micah.	Isaiah.	Micah.	Isaiah.
i. 9–16.	x. 28–32.	iv. 4 end.	i. 20 end.
ii. 1–2.	v. 8.	iv. 10.	xxxii. 11.
ii. 6–11.	xxviii. 10; xxx. 10, 11.	v. 2–4.	vii. 14.
		v. 5.	ix. 6.
ii. 11.	xxviii. 7.	v. 9–14.	ii. 6–17.
ii. 12 and iv. 7.	x. 20–23.	vi. 6–8.	i. 11–17.
iii. 5–7.	xxix. 9–12.	vii. 7.	viii. 17.
iii. 12.	xxxii. 14.	vii. 12.	xi. 11.

restoration, when Yahweh will lead back His captives. Prof. Driver thinks this may be an oracle of Micah's, but inserted in the wrong place. Other commentators assume it to be an insertion of the exilic period.

iii. 1–12 Micah addresses the leaders of Judah—note, the Northern Kingdom is now destroyed, and the general term Jacob, or Israel, applies to Judah, cf. verses 1 and 10—and he shows them the conduct which must entail the destruction of Zion.

Looking at this first section of the book, we may date it approximately between 725 B.C., when Shalmaneser began the siege of Samaria, and the year or two which followed its destruction by Sargon in 721 B.C. When Sargon marched on through the Shephelah to his victory at Raphia in 719 B.C. it may be that Micah broke silence, just as the great Assyrian army was clattering past Moresheth, fresh from the ruin of Samaria. It is, however, possible that chs. ii, iii were composed a few years later, between 719 and 701 B.C., the year when Sennacherib was driven back from Jerusalem.

In any case the motive of the whole prophecy is the iniquity of Israel which brought the Assyrian to Samaria, and the social corruption in Jerusalem, following the prosperous years of Amaziah, 2 Kings xiv. 7–22, which was bringing the same dreaded enemy to punish the Southern Kingdom.

Now we turn to chs. iv, v. The whole tone changes: we are in an atmosphere of eschatological hopes. We see, iv. 1–5, the last days when all nations will worship Yahweh, and universal peace will prevail. In iv. 6–8 the Exile is assumed, and the restoration is promised. In iv. 9–10 we see the ruin of Jerusalem and the Exile in Babylon, but the assured deliverance; to this also belongs v. 1. iv. 11–13, quite another picture of Jerusalem besieged, completely victorious over her foes. v. 2–15 presents a grand apocalyptic picture. A ruler arises out of Beth-lehem Ephrathah, and marshals the flock of Israel.

Now there are sufficient leaders to resist the Assyrian, and even to destroy him. The remnant of Jacob becomes a dew to the thirsty nations, a majestic lion marching to victory. Then all signs of war and of superstitious worship will be destroyed, and the nations which will not yield to the Divine ruler will be cut off.

The complete change of tone in these loosely connected visions of restoration and victory has driven the commentators, from Stade to Cheyne, to attribute them to another author and a later age. But, after the deliverance of Hezekiah from Sennacherib in 701 B.C. and the suppression of the guilty ruling class, especially if we remember Isaiah's confident predictions that Zion should be saved, and a Deliverer should come, *God-with-us*, it is quite probable that Micah received these more hopeful visions. As Prof. G. A. Smith says, iv. 6, 7 may refer to the Northern Israelites now in exile. Or if it refers to the Southern Kingdom and the Exile which was to be a century later, we have no right to deny the possibility of a prophet dipping into the future. The more particular 'and shalt come even unto Babylon' (verse 10) may be a later insertion, *ex eventu*, and for that reason it is no decisive evidence against attributing the passage to Micah. The signs of Yahweh's rule in ch. v may all be paralleled in Hosea and in Isaiah, with the exception of the abolition of the Mazzeboth and Asherim ('pillars,' verse 13). But considering Hezekiah's energy in removing those seductive symbols (2 Chron. xxxi. 1), a prophet in his time might easily include their destruction in a description of a re-established Kingdom of God. Then the description of the ruler from Beth-lehem reminds one of Isaiah's description of the Virgin's child. As contemporaries, and yet as independent prophets, they would naturally express the same expectation in different forms. And, as Pusey says, the fulfilment of the Messianic forecasts brings the two together: 'Ere Jesus was born the angel announced the birth of the Virgin's Son, *God-with-us*, in the words of Isaiah. When he was born he

was pointed out as the object of worship to the first converts from the heathen on the authority of God through Micah.'

There is then no sufficient reason to deny Micah's authorship of these chapters or to limit his share in them, with Nowack, to iv. 9, 10[a], v. 1, and v. 9–13, unless it can be shown that the prophets never predicted the future, or never had mingled visions of exile and restoration, of punishment and Messianic glory. The argument against the chapters is purely *a priori*[1]; for it would be absurd to say that Micah could not have written, in the course of many years' ministry, a passage so different in tone and style as this is from chs. i–iii. The acknowledged Micah is too brief and particular to furnish a criterion for showing that he could not, at a different time, have written in a different vein.

Now turn to ch. vi. Here is another change of style and subject. vi. 1–8 is a noble dialogue between Yahweh and His people, who are seeking by cruel and heathen practices to propitiate Him; the grandest ethical utterance of the O. T. declares that what Yahweh really demands is justice, mercy, and humility. On the strength of verse 7 Ewald and his followers brought the passage to the days of Manasseh, when, as 2 Kings xxi shows, human sacrifices were practised. But Micah may have lived into the days of Manasseh; and, if he did not, in view of the common Semitic practice, there is nothing extraordinary in his having raised the supposition, verse 7, before the heathen practice was received widely in Israel. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3 assigns the practice to the time of Ahaz. At the same time, Nowack, and even Prof. Driver, think

[1] Nowack decides that iv. 1–4 (Isa. ii. 2–4) cannot be pre-exilic, but his only argument is that it resembles Isa. xl–lxvi and has no parallel in the other prophets of the Assyrian period. This is arbitrary, and ignores the work of the Spirit in a prophet's mind. On the same subjective grounds he dismisses the bulk of chs. iv. v.

the probability is that the prophecy is from an anonymous prophet. Perhaps it was inserted in the Book of Micah because of the 'hear ye' with which it begins; cf. Mic. i. 2. I prefer to follow Prof. G. A. Smith, and to say that the passage contains nothing strange to the eighth century or to Micah. vi. 9–16 is a charge of iniquity in trade and life, which reminds one forcibly of Amos, and no decisive argument can be adduced against Micah's authorship.

Ch. vii contains in verses 1–6 a cry of Zion over the destruction of her children, even her pious ones. Granted that it reminds one of Malachi, yet there is no line in it which might not have come from Micah or from any prophet who watches with sad eyes the iniquity of his time.

vii. 7–20 shows the punishment fallen on Zion, and Zion's recognition that it is the reward of its sins. Out of this springs the hope of restoration, verses 7–10. The prophet promises that Zion's walls shall be rebuilt and the heathen punished for their sins, verses 11–13. Then follows a prayer that Yahweh will restore His people to Gilead and Bashan, and humble the heathen in the dust, verses 14–17, and the book ends with a Psalm of praise for the mercy of Yahweh, verses 18–20.

Here it must be granted that verse 11 seems to belong to a time after the return from Exile. It reminds us of Lamentations; and the passage bears an affinity to Isaiah xl–lxvi. Nowack peremptorily decides that it cannot be Micah's. Wellhausen declares, 'between verses 6 and 7 yawns a century.' But, as Prof. G. A. Smith says, the curious limitation of the reference to Bashan and Gilead might suggest the time of Micah when the Northern Kingdom had recently fallen and those districts had been desolated by the Assyrian, though another explanation seems more natural. It is easier to regard verse 11 as an exilic insertion than to show that the passage as a whole is not Micah's. 'It is not clear,' as Prof. Driver says, 'that the expressions here, which seem to imply that a state of exile is in the

prophet's mind, are more than parts of the imaginative picture drawn by him of the calamity which he sees to be impending' (*Introd. O. T.* p. 313).

Now to turn from the book to the man. He is the prophet of the people; his whole soul goes out to the oppressed, and he identifies religion with mercy. He is, like Amos, a great social reformer, for he links the idea of God with the cause of the people. Isaiah moved in the court circles and in high politics. Micah moved among the people; and his only concern with the movement of the nations was to show that the Assyrian came down upon Israel as a penalty because the rich and the powerful oppressed the weak and the poor.

Dr. Duff, in his *Old Testament Theology* (i. 307), gives a fine description of the man and his message, and the nature of his inspiration. A brief quotation may suffice, and set us on the study of the book with zest: 'Brave too the prophet was, and that in moments of real danger. No fancied sketch of an attack is that in ch. ii. When he protected the fugitives the thieving Gittites turned on him with gnashing wolves' teeth. It is far too realistic and too probable to be a fiction; such blows as he brings down in ch. iii on princes, prophets, traders, must have been resented. We feel this before we turn to Jeremiah's book (xxvi. 17–19), and read how they seized this Micah to destroy him in their rage. The story of his fearlessness, his danger, and deliverance lived on for a hundred years, a beacon-light to check the vicious and to cheer the brave: . . . this bravery sprang from real spiritual insight and vision of the Invisible.'

It was this genuine ethical sympathy with the poor which made him a suitable delineator of the essentials of religion (vi. 8) and of the promised Deliverer (v. 2–4). If these passages were not from Micah, they were from one like him.

Chronology

B.C.

727. Accession of Shalmaneser.

721. Accession of Sargon and capture of Samaria.

720. Accession of Hezekiah.

711. Sargon's invasion of Judah, which we learn from the Cuneiform Inscriptions, to punish Hezekiah for joining with Ashdod in rebelling against him. (Perhaps 'Sargon' should be read for 'Sennacherib' in 2 Kings xviii. 13; Isa. xxxvi. 1.)

705. Accession of Sennacherib.

701. His invasion of Judah.

692. Accession of Manasseh.

MICAH

THE word of the LORD that came to Micah the 1
Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah,
kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and
Jerusalem.

Hear, ye peoples, all of you; hearken, O earth, and 2

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i. **1. Micah** is the same as Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 28), and means 'Who is like Yahweh?' Josephus calls both our prophet and Micaiah-ben-Imlah, Μιχαίας. It was a common name in Israel; cf. the Levite in Judges xvii.

Morashtite: i. e. 'Micah of Moresheth-gath' (verse 14). Moresheth ('a village east of Eleutheropolis,' Jerome) was a place in the Shephelah, or range of low hills which lie between the hill-country of Judah and the Philistine plain. It was seventeen miles west of Tekoa, where Amos was born, and looked westward over a fruitful land, as Tekoa looked eastward over a wilderness. Upon one of the western terraces, nearly a thousand feet above the sea, it commanded the undulating plain in which were Lachish, Eglon, Shaphir, &c., and where ran the great road, so often traversed by Egyptian or Assyrian armies, between Asia and Africa. Behind it, among the round hills of Judah, was Adullam, David's hold, and the field where he fought Goliath; and further east was the high ridge with its defiles leading down to Beth-lehem and Hebron. The valley-mouth near which it stood was the south-western gateway of Judaea.

in the days of Jotham, &c. (approximately from 739 to 692 B.C.). There is nothing in our book which carries us back to the earliest reign. But Ahaz was on the Southern throne when Samaria fell in 721, and Hezekiah succeeded him in 720 B.C.

which he saw: the physical figure for an inward perception of facts through the influence of the Divine Spirit. Hence the prophetic truth is often called a vision (Isa. i. 1; Obad. 1; Nahum i. 1).

Samaria and Jerusalem. This prophet has an equal concern for both the kingdoms: the one that was now crashing down in ruin, the other which was by its sins courting the same disaster.

i. 2–8. *The threat of punishment, fulfilled in 721 when Sargon took Samaria, and in 711 when he invaded Judah.*

2. Hear, ye peoples. Note how this has been imported into the

all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness
3 against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For,
behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will
come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.
4 And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the
valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, as waters
5 that are poured down a steep place. For the trans-
gression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house
of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not
Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are
6 they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria as

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speech of the other Micah (ben-Imlah), 1 Kings xxii. 28. The 'peoples' cannot be the tribes of Israel, unless **earth** is to be rendered 'land'; cf. Jer. i. 5, who is a prophet unto the nations. Though Micah is thinking of Judah, he feels that the word of Yahweh applies to all nations, which are on moral grounds akin, and thus Yahweh will be witness against them all in due time.

all of you: *lit.* 'all of them.'

the Lord GOD should be 'the Lord Yahweh.'

his holy temple: *sc.* His heavenly dwelling-place (cf. Isa. xviii. 4), as verse 3 shows. Ps. xi. 4; Isa. lxiii. 15; Hab. ii. 20; Zech. ii. 13.

4. The image is that of a storm, as in Ps. xviii. Under the foot of Yahweh coming to judgement the hills melt like wax, and valleys are cloven asunder as if they were a sheet of falling water which is parted by every jutting rock. (Cf. Judges v. 5; Ps. lxviii. 2; Isa. lxiv. 1; Hab. iii. 6.)

5. all this: viz. the Theophany.

house of Israel (Amos vi. 13): Wellhausen wishes to alter it into the 'house of Judah,' to suit the parallel clause.

What is the transgression? (the stronger word 'apostasy' would be nearer the Hebrew): rather, 'Who is the transgression?' The sinner is indicated, the sin incarnate; Samaria is personified.

high places: *bamôth.* It was natural to think of these high places which were the constant occasions of sin (2 Chron. xxviii. 25, of Ahaz). But the Syr., LXX, and Targ. read *chattath*, i. e. 'the sin of Judah.' To the prophet in the country, as to many similarly placed to-day, the capital figures itself as a sink of iniquity. The imagination is more frequently used to embody the vices than the virtues of mankind.

an heap of the field, *and* as the plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all 7
her graven images shall be beaten to pieces, and all her hires shall be burned with fire, and all her idols will I lay desolate: for of the hire of an harlot hath she gathered them, and unto the hire of an harlot shall they return. For this will I wail and howl, I will go stripped 8

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6. an heap of the field: rather, 'into a heap,' i. e. ruinous heaps in the field—a perfect picture of desolation. Pusey quotes Porter: 'The stones of the temples and palaces of Samaria have been carefully removed from the rich soil, thrown together in heaps, built up in the rude walk of terraces, and rolled down into the valley below.' So iii. 12; Ps. lxxix. 1; Jer. xxvi. 18. The blindness of criticism is illustrated by Wellhausen's odd remark here: 'There is the wildness of the field, herb, flowers, trees, stones of the field, but no ruins of the field.' He therefore changes the text in order to get 'forest,' cf. Ezek. xx. 46; it is a salutary warning that we cannot follow blindly even the wisest critic.

plantings of a vineyard: rather, 'into the plantings.' The hill of Samaria is fruitful, and when the city is a ruin the vines grow on the old site. John Hyrcanus fulfilled the forecast in the last clause of the verse (Joseph. *Antiq.* xiii. 10. 3).

7. With the ruin of the city goes the ruin of her powerless idolatries (so Isa. ii. 20, xxx. 22, xxxi. 7).

her hires: i. e. as the latter clause of the verse explains, the offerings of the idol shrines are regarded as the rewards of prostitution. Wellhausen thinks that another word for **images** is required here, and suggests 'her Asherim' (v. 14). This is not to interpret, but to rewrite, Micah.

hire of an harlot: Hos. ii. 7; Joel iii. 3. The wealth gained by these unclean religious practices of the temple-slaves (Deut. xxiii. 17, 18), seized by the Assyrian, will be returned to heathen temples in another land by methods as unclean.

hath she gathered them: Targ., Peshit. and Vulg. read better, 'they were gathered.'

i. 8–16. *Micah's Lamentation.*

8. Now the prophet utters his lament, in a spirit like Jeremiah's. His sorrow is primarily because this calamity is coming also to his own people and to Jerusalem; but he has tears also for Samaria.

and naked: I will make a wailing like the jackals, and
9 a mourning like the ostriches. For her wounds are
incurable: for it is come even unto Judah; it reacheth
10 unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem. Tell it

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stripped. As the word occurs only with verbs of motion, it must mean 'barefooted,' a sign of mourning, 2 Sam. xv. 30; Isa. xx. 2.

naked: i. e. with only the undergarment or *chiton* on, Job xxii. 6.

jackals howl, Job xxx. 29.

ostriches: *lit.* 'daughters of the desert.' The Arabs call the ostrich still *abu-sahara*, 'father of the desert.' The gruesome groans of these great birds are well known.

Cheyne beautifully says: 'The prophets did not cease to be men when they received the gift of inspiration. Sometimes they seem to have had a kind of double consciousness, uniting them on the one hand with the inspiring Spirit, and on the other with their much-loved people. Hence their abrupt transitions from stern denunciation to tender compassion.'

9. wounds. As 'incurable' is singular, and so is the verb following, we must read the noun in the singular: 'her stroke is desperate: it is come.' So the LXX and Syr. read.

incurable: Jer. xv. 18; in this case because it has reached the heart, Jerusalem.

unto the gate: Obad. 11, 13.

even to Jerusalem Wellhausen considers a gloss on the phrase **gate of my people.** Jerusalem is to the country what the gate is to the city—the scene of solemn meetings; Isa. xxxiii. 20. The prophet sees in vision the approach of Sennacherib to the capital, eighteen years before the event.

10–16 consist of a series of curious puns on the names of towns. We find the most likely interpretation of the passage in the idea that Micah is contemplating the Assyrian army which was to invade Judah in its passage through the towns which surrounded his own country home, Moresheth-gath. But the text is very obscure, and often defies assured interpretation.

Isa. x. 28 records the approach of the Assyrian to Jerusalem in a very different spirit. Micah was convinced that Jerusalem would be overthrown, as finally she was; Isaiah was sure that she would be delivered, as she was for the time. Prof. G. A. Smith finely says: 'Micah's elegy sweeps across the landscape so dear to him.' Sargon was marching past these towns and villages of the Shephelah to defeat Egypt at Raphia. The prophet from his lofty town watches the ominous march; and imagines that the host will come back by Lachish and Mareshah to march on Jerusalem from that side, as invaders usually did.

not in Gath, weep not at all: at Beth-le-Aphrah have I
rolled myself in the dust. Pass ye away, O inhabitant 11
of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame: the inhabitant of
Zaanan is not come forth; the wailing of Beth-ezel shall
take from you the stay thereof. For the inhabitant of 12
Maroth waiteth anxiously for good: because evil is
come down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.

This local patriotism, though it makes the allusions obscure, gives flesh and blood to the prophet. He is like Burns singing of Ayrshire, with Edinburgh in the far distance; but with how different a note from Burns'!

10. Prof. G. A. Smith tries to keep the paranomasia thus: 'Tell it not in Tell-town; weep not in Weep-town; in House of Dust, roll thyself in dust.'

Gath: the Eleutheropolis or Beit-Jibrin of Jerome was near to Moresheth. The phrase recalls 2 Sam. i. 20. Pusey thinks the phrase 'Tell it not in Gath' was already a proverb, as it is with us. But this is hardly likely in this connexion, with other towns in the neighbourhood similarly apostrophized. Gath was destroyed by Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 6, but it still was a symbol of the hostile Philistines, and the prophet cries, '*Begath al taggidu.*'

weep not: it is '*Bako al tibku*,' 'weep not in Acco.' Was it the town in the north from which the Canaanites were never expelled (Judges i. 31)? Wellhausen makes it 'Weep, weep, in Bochim' (LXX recension, ἐν Βακειμ), Judges ii. 1–5.

Beth-le-Aphrah: south of Beit-Jibrin is now a wady, El-Ghufr, in which one can catch the echo of le-Aphrah. The pun is '*Bebeth le-aphrah aphar hithpalashi*,' 'in the House of the Dust have I sprinkled myself with dust' (2 Sam. xiii. 19), and the last word suggests Philistine.

11. Shaphir: i. e. 'Beauty-town.' This is identified with Suafir, four and a half miles south-east of Ashdod.

Zaanan: i. e. 'March-town' ('Zenan' of Joshua xv. 37?), 'the inhabitress of March-town shall not march forth'; 'inhabitress,' the virgin of the town (Isa. i. 8).

Beth-ezel: unknown. No pun here. Its wailing incapacitates it to render help.

12. Maroth is unknown: it means 'bitternesses,' i. e. perfect grief. There is no good news.

the gate of Jerusalem. Sennacherib speaks of this gate in his inscription (Taylor's cylinder, col. iii. ll. 22, 23), 'the exit of the great gate of his city I caused them to break through.' Though this was probably Sargon (as Isa. xxii. 7).

13 Bind the chariot to the swift steed, O inhabitant of
Lachish: she was the beginning of sin to the daughter
of Zion; for the transgressions of Israel were found in
14 thee. Therefore shalt thou give a parting gift to
Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib shall be a deceit-
15 ful thing unto the kings of Israel. I will yet bring unto
thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah, him that shall possess

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13. Lachish. The play on words is made by the fact that **to the swift steed** is the same as 'Lachish,' with the addition of one letter and the omission of another. Lachish is summoned to battle, to resist the invader. In what way this ancient city was the beginning of sin to Israel, and the city of the Theocracy, we cannot tell. But the tablets of Tel-el-Amarna, and the layers of ruins found at Tell-el-Hesy, the site of ancient Lachish, assure us that the city was fortified and important ages before the Israelites entered Canaan. Hitzig conjectured that the horses of the sun (2 Kings xxiii. 11) were borrowed from this stronghold of idolatry. Prof. G. A. Smith gives a more probable explanation. Lachish was on the border of Egypt. In the Tel-el-Amarna letters it was under an Egyptian governor, Timrida. The sin of Israel at this time was its tendency to lean on Egypt and to accept subsidies of horses and chariots from that country. This sin might be conceived as being learnt from Lachish, which geographically leaned on Egypt, Lachish, the very name of which suggests the chariot-horse. Lachish was taken by Sennacherib, as he records in his bas-reliefs (cf. Isa. xxxvi. 2, xxxvii. 8). Israel stands for the Southern Kingdom here, as was natural now that the Northern Kingdom (more specifically Israel) had fallen.

beginning of sin to . . . What a world of evil lies in the three words! (Pusey).

14. Moresheth, with one letter changed, would mean 'the beloved' (Deut. xxii. 23); and that seems to be the point of the play on words. This was Micah's own beloved town. The gift referred to is the bridal dower (1 Kings ix. 16). The parting gift to the town implies that it is going far away from home into captivity!

Achzib (Joshua xv. 44), perhaps Ain-Kezbeh, eight miles north-north-east of Beit-Jibrin. As the margin shows, the pun is, 'Achzib shall be Achzab' (a winter brook, that fails in the heat, Jer. xv. 18) to the kings of Israel (*sc.* Judah), affording no real defence or check to the invader.

15. Mareshah (Joshua xv. 44). The name still is found in a ruin one mile south of Beit-Jibrin. The Hebrew word

thee: the glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam.
Make thee bald, and poll thee for the children of thy 16
delight: enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are
gone into captivity from thee.

Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon 2
their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it,

'possessor' is from the same root as Mareshah. The possessor in this case was Sargon.

Adullam: six miles north-east of Beit-Jibrin. The glory of Israel shall come, perhaps as a fugitive. Micah's thought may have been of the great king David once hiding in Adullam. The caves near Adullam could shelter an army. The outer chamber of one of these vast caverns is 270 feet by 126; galleries lead into minor chambers. They have been excavated and built and lighted for human habitation (Pusey). Now the dying kingdom will be reduced to the band of outlaws out of which it sprang. But the phrase is very obscure.

16. Make thee bald. Judah is addressed. The mother is to mourn for her lost children, by the method common in ancient Israel (Isa. iii. 24, xxii. 12; Jer. xvi. 6, xli. 5; Amos viii. 10), but forbidden in the Deuteronomic Law (Deut. xiv. 1). The children may be the towns of Judah, or the inhabitants of Jerusalem; both are going into captivity.

eagle: *nesher* is the Gier-eagle (*vultur percnopterus*), which is bald on the top of its head, with slight covering behind, found in Egypt and Palestine. If the common eagle were meant, we should have to think of the spring moulting in which the bird is greatly weakened: but then it is not the head alone that moults.

ii. 1–11. The social sins which had incurred the punishment predicted in ch. i. Micah says to Judah what Amos had said to Israel. With the spirit of Langland, he sees things from the country-side, and charges the landowners with robbing the poor. That, and not idolatry or wrong foreign-policy, is the crying evil to the countryman. Both Isaiah and Micah are needed; but Micah's recognition that social oppression is the cardinal sin gives him a burning message to our own day. It is unfortunate that these eleven verses are so imperfectly preserved, but the fiery spirit burning in them is unmistakable.

1, 2. The ways of the great.

upon their beds, where honest toilers sleep, and good men meditate on God, Ps. lxiii. 6, or at least are still, Ps. iv. 4, these avaricious landlords form plans to increase their wealth at the

2 because it is in the power of their hand. And they
covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them
away: and they oppress a man and his house, even
3 a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the
LORD: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil,
from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall
4 ye walk haughtily; for it is an evil time. In that day

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expense of the people, and even work out their plans in thought. Wellhausen would strike out **work evil,** not seeing the appropriateness of the description of going over the plans of iniquity in the wakeful hours. They rise early, as good men would for prayer, to carry out their rapacious designs as far as their power goes.

in the power of their hand. Gen. xxxi. 29; Deut. xxviii. 32; Neh. v. 5; Prov. iii. 27.

covet fields. The law against coveting (Exod. xx. 17) Cheyne calls the deepest of all the Ten Commandments. Here Isaiah (v. 8) and Micah echo each other: cf. Hos. v. 10.

houses: Exod. xx. 17; Deut. v. 21; 1 Kings xxi.

take them away refers rather to the owners than to the houses, for the Hebrew is 'lift them up.'

a man. Prof. G. A. Smith translates *geber* 'a good man.' This ruin of man and homestead is the familiar scene of all times, where wealth forgets its duties and private property in land obliterates the sleeping partnership which in the case of land must always be conceded to every member of the community. Lev. xxvi. 34; Job xxxi. 38; Hab. ii. 9-11 show how the land is punished for the sins of its lords. It should be remembered that the system of land tenure in Israel was like that of the village community described by Sir Henry Maine in his *Ancient Law*; the property was inalienable, and even if purchased it reverted to the clan at the end of fifty years (Lev. xxv. 8-17; Num. xxvii. 1-11, xxxiii. 54; 1 Kings xxi. 4).

3-5. The punishment which shall fall on these powerful and respectable thieves. While they devise evil, Yahweh is devising evil for them. It is a yoke, *sc.* of captivity (cf. Hos. x. 11) which will weigh them down, and they cannot shake it off their necks.

this family: i. e. Israel. Jer. viii. 3; Amos iii. 1 explain the term.

walk haughtily: rather, 'upright'; under the yoke of exile the necks of the Israelites will be bent like those of oxen; but the idea of pride is included: cf. Isa. ii. 11.

shall they take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, *and* say, We be utterly spoiled: he changeth the portion of my people: how doth he remove *it* from me! to the rebellious he divideth our fields. Therefore thou shalt have none 5 that shall cast the line by lot in the congregation of the

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an evil time: not perhaps ethically (Amos v. 13), but in a physical sense.

take up a parable: *lit.* 'a similitude,' but used to express an utterance characterized by parallelism of any kind. Here it is the wail over the dead, like Amos v. 16. The professional mourners come and wail for the ruined people, speaking as it were in their stead. Stade, with Nowack's approval, rewrites the verse to make a proper poetical strophe:—

> 'The possession of my people is measured out with the rod,
> There is none to restore it;
> To those who led us away captive our fields are divided,
> We are utterly spoiled.'

Wellhausen strikes out the word which is rendered **lamentation.** But it may be rendered, as in the margin, 'It is done.' It has been suggested that 'It is done,' like the Latin '*Fuit*,' was the beginning of a familiar dirge. But it is better to take the Hebrew words *nehah nehi nehjah* as it were 'woe, woe, woe,' in the way the Revisers have done. The words of the dirge are simple and intelligible, though the different readings of the LXX suggest that the text is disturbed. For **changeth** LXX reads 'is measured off.' For **how doth he remove** LXX reads 'there was none to hinder him.'

divideth our fields. Once in the settlement of the land Yahweh divided the fields to His people, Num. xxvi. 53, 55; Joshua xiii. 7, xiv. 5, xviii. 2, 5, 10, xix. 51, and Ezekiel prophesied such a division in the restoration (xlvii. 21). But Micah describes the division of the lands among the rebellious, viz. the heathen conquerors. It is striking to find this prophet, and Isaiah (x. 5–15, xxxvii. 26), speaking of the heathen as rebellious. They felt as Paul did (Rom. i. 20), that even the heathen had a certain natural light, and their sins are rebellion against God.

cast the line by lot: or perhaps better, 'cast the measuring-line upon a lot,' as in the happy days of early conquest when Joshua appointed the lots of the several tribes (Joshua xv. 1, xvi. 1, xvii. 1: cf. Judges i. 3). The line is, of course, the measuring-line used in the demarcation of the allotments.

6 LORD. Prophesy ye not, *thus* they prophesy. They
shall not prophesy to these: reproaches shall not depart.
7 Shall it be said, O house of Jacob, Is the spirit of the
LORD straitened? are these his doings? Do not my
8 words do good to him that walketh uprightly? But of
late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye strip the

6, 7. In these two verses we have evidently the protests of the wealthy and powerful persons whom the prophet has been denouncing. To suppose with some commentators that 'false prophets' is the subject here tends to confusion rather than light. Unfortunately the language is obscure.

Prophesy ye not. The text is corrupt, says Wellhausen. For there is no disparagement in the word *hattiph*, which, meaning literally to 'drop,' is constantly used for the utterance of a prophetic message, e. g. Ezek. xxi. 2; Amos vii. 16. And the word for **depart** is in the singular, with a plural noun. Things are a bit clearer if we may, with the Peshitto, bring over 'in the congregation of the Lord' from verse 5 to verse 6.

to these: rather, as in marg., 'of these things.' It is the object of the verb, and refers to what is said in verses 3-5. With Nowack we may alter **reproaches** into the singular by a difference of a vowel point, and may read the clause as a question. Thus we get—and it is the most satisfactory rendering possible in the condition of the text:—'In the congregation of the Lord, "Prophesy not," they prophesy, "let them not prophesy of these things. Shall reproach not cease?"' That is, these self-satisfied men, as if prophesying themselves, bid Micah and the true prophets to be silent, and reproach them with urging such reproaches against the people of God. Thus there is a parallel with Isa. xxx. 9, 10, and with Amos ii. 12, v. 10. The later persecution of prophets was preceded by this kind of grumbling and self-righteous protest. They go on in a tone of affected piety: **Shall it be said, O house of Jacob, Is the spirit of the LORD straitened?** (i. e. ceased to be longsuffering, Exod. xxxiv. 6) **are these** (viz. the calamities denounced in verses 4, 5) **his doings?** The remaining clause of the verse, unless we might, with Nowack and Prof. G. A. Smith, boldly change **my words** into 'his words,' belongs to the following verse, where Yahweh begins to speak.

The phrase **him that walketh uprightly** is in the Hebrew ungrammatical and impossible, but the sense may be considered certain.

8. The sudden change, first from the prophet's word in verses 1-5 to the protests of his hearers in 6, 7[a], and then to the utter-

robe from off the garment from them that pass by
securely *as men* averse from war. The women of my 9
people ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from
their young children ye take away my glory for ever.
Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because 10

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ance of God (7^b to the end of the chapter), is very perplexing to the English reader. It reminds us of Hosea.

This oracle refers to an outrage recently committed. Some peaceful people on the high-road had been attacked, stripped, and robbed, and the women and children had been carried off from their homes. This lawless rapacity of the great is introduced with the question: 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? But the other day my people rose up as an enemy: ye strip,' &c. The main difficulty is that **my people** means the rapacious grandees in verse 8, and the victimized poor in verse 9. But, of course, both were nominally Yahweh's people. Wellhausen and others make extensive alterations of the text, but do not improve the meaning.

robe ... garment. The robe is the *salmah* or upper garment, which was thrown over the tunic by day and used as a covering by night. But the meaning of the word translated 'garment' is only a guess, and the preposition translated **from off** is quite a solecism. Cheyne translates: 'ye pull the robe clean away from the garment.'

9. houses. Wellhausen changes the text, and gets 'the women of my people ye tear from their darling children.' But this entirely spoils the force of verse 10, where the oppressors are to be carried away into exile, precisely because they robbed their poor neighbours of their homes; cf. Isa. x. 2. It is a mercy that scholars have not the power to emend the text, or in a few generations the Bible would be completely rewritten.

my glory: viz. the privilege of belonging to the congregation of Yahweh, which is lost when the children are sold into a heathen land.

Prof. G. A. Smith gives an apposite quotation from Langland to show how, in the England of the fourteenth century, the rich robbed the poor as in the days of Micah. But he might have cited similar illustrations from the nineteenth century.

10. For these iniquities to the poor the rich are to be punished by the Exile; cf. Rev. xiii. 10.

this (*sc.* land) **is not your rest,** though it was once given for

of uncleanness that destroyeth, even with a grievous
11 destruction. If a man walking in wind and falsehood
do lie, *saying*, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of
strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.
12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will
surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them

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that purpose, Deut. xii. 9, 10 (cf. Isa. xxviii. 12). For the land being defiled by iniquity, see Lev. xviii. 25.

The emphatic repetition, 'uncleanness that bringeth destruction, destruction incurable,' is a flashlight on the connexion between sin and eternal death.

11. walking in wind and falsehood. The irony of this description of a false prophet is enhanced in the Hebrew, where the word *ruach* means both wind and Spirit. The prophet walking in 'the Spirit and falsehood' is the most terrible phenomenon of the religious life. In him the Spirit becomes merely wind.

I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink. The phrase has a meaning for modern states, in which the Drink interest not only dominates politics, but offers its sordid support to religion. The union of Beer and Bible is anticipated by Micah. A degraded nation rejects God's prophet and accepts that corrupt combination in its place. The modernness of the ancient prophets is due to the unchangeable character of sins, and the equally unchangeable character of God.

ii. 12, 13. These two verses are a complete change from what has just been said. They assume that the people are in exile; they promise to a remnant a return out of the distant prison-house, under the lead of the breaker.

It is conceivable that the prophet, while denouncing punishment (verse 4) and exile (verse 10), had a bright and sudden vision of the glad return which was afterwards to be. Michaelis and Ewald supposed that the verses were spoken by the false prophets; but that is equally revolting to the connexion and to our religious sense. Von Ryssel, Steiner, and others, agree that the words are Micah's, but consider them out of place, see iv. 6–8. Most modern commentators think the verses were written in the Exile, and interpolated here in the prophecies of Micah. The reasons given are entirely subjective. We may treat them as a ray of sunlight streaming for a moment through the cloudy and dark day of denunciation.

the remnant: the ordinary prophetic word for the survivors from a judgement (Isa. x. 20, 21).

together as the sheep of Bozrah: as a flock in the midst of their pasture, they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of* men. The breaker is gone up before 13
them: they have broken forth and passed on to the gate, and are gone out thereat: and their king is passed on before them, and the LORD at the head of them.

And I said, Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and 3
rulers of the house of Israel: is it not for you to know

Bozrah: in Edom, Isa. xxxiv. 6; Amos i. 12. But as this allusion to an Edomite town is unexplained, Nowack would read *betzirah* and explain it by Arab. *Sîra*, which is the sheltering fold in which sheep are penned at night. So Cheyne: 'as sheep into a fold.'

pasture (as Isa. v. 17): the word is uncertain, perhaps it is the subject to the following verb, 'shall hum.'

make great noise, &c. Prof. G. A. Smith happily renders 'they shall hum with men,' which represents the swarming exiles gathering to their home. For the comparison with sheep see Ezek. xxxiv. 31, xxxvi. 38.

The breaker. Pococke and Pusey quote Jewish authorities to show that this was a recognized designation, borrowed from this passage, of Messiah; he breaks the prison bars of the captives (cf. Isa. xliii. 6, xlviii. 20, lii. 11, 12, lxi. 1), and leads them out at the gate of the city of their captivity (cf. Nahum iii. 13). So Cheyne: 'We need not rack our brains as to who this conqueror is; in the light of other prophecies he can be no other than the Messiah.'

their king: i. e. Yahweh, Exod. xiii. 21; Isa. lii. 12; Jer. xxxi. 8 f. It is evident that these two verses have more affinity with the great prophet of the Exile than with Micah's contemporary, Isaiah.

iii. Micah continues from ii. 11 to assail the leaders of Israel, the authorities whom the false prophets have flattered and misled.

1. And I said. The conjunction does not join it with what has preceded. It rather begins a new subject; cf. 1 Samuel, which begins, 'And it came to pass.'

Jacob . . . Israel means Judah, verse 10.

heads: the official class, largely members of the royal house: Jer. xxi. 11, 12.

rulers. The word means *lit.* 'they who cut,' or 'decide'; it is found in the Turkish *cadhi* to-day. Isaiah called the authorities 'rulers of Sodom,' i. 10. It is the triumph of a Christian civilization,

2 judgement? who hate the good, and love the evil; who
pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from
3 off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people;
and they flay their skin from off them, and break their
bones: yea, they chop them in pieces, as for the pot,
4 and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry
unto the LORD, but he will not answer them: yea, he
will hide his face from them at that time, according as
5 they have wrought evil in their doings. Thus saith the
LORD concerning the prophets that make my people to

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and it is unknown outside Christian communities, for judges to **know judgement.**

2. pluck off their skin. The rulers are conceived as shepherds tearing and devouring the sheep they ought to pasture; cf. Ezek. xxxiv. 2-10. Prof. G. A. Smith quotes the peasant's remark about the Seigneurs in Louis XIV's time: 'They crop us, as the sheep crops grass.'

their skin must refer to the people mentioned in verse 3. Wellhausen thinks this second part of verse 2 is an interpolation, because verse 3 repeats it.

3. chop... in pieces: the word elsewhere means 'widen'; LXX, however, identifies it with a similar word which means 'to break up bread.' Prof. G. A. Smith preserves the word in the text, meaning 'to spread out,' and renders 'and served it up as if from a pot, like meat from the thick of the cauldron.' These abuses were due to a social change. The nobles were no longer farmers, like Saul or Nabal, but merchant-princes, enriched by traffic with Phoenicia. Prices rose, a poor class developed, and the rich seemed to live at the expense of the poor, as in our modern States (see Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 347).

4. Then: *sc.* when the judgement begins, and the day of mercy is past.

he will not answer: cf. Ps. xviii. 41; Prov. xxi. 13.

hide his face: Deut. xxxi. 17, &c.; Ps. xliv. 24.

5. The false prophets are largely responsible for the oppressive rulers. As Pusey says, little seeing how far his words go, 'No error is hopeless save what is taught in the name of God.' 'The head and front of their offending was their use of their position to obtain easy and luxurious lives for themselves, while some took to prophesying as a means of earning a livelihood (Amos vii. 12; Mic. iii. 5). If they were not sufficiently bribed they would proclaim a holy war against an innocent man (Mic. iii. 5)'

err; that bite with their teeth and cry, Peace; and whoso putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: Therefore it shall be night unto you, 6
that ye shall have no vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them.
And the seers shall be ashamed, and the diviners 7
confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips: for there is no answer of God. But I truly am full of power 8
by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgement, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to

(R. Bruce Taylor, *Expos. Times*, xiii. 226); cf. Isa. iii. 12, ix. 16; Lam. ii. 14; Ezek. xiii. 10, 19.

bite with their teeth: i. e. while they are fed they proclaim peace to their patrons, regardless of truth. When their alimony is withheld they denounce the innocent men who have not bribed them.

sanctify **war** (marg.): i. e. declare holy war, as if God had ordained it, referring only to private vengeance: cf. Jer. vi. 4; Joel iii. 9.

This disease of sham and interested prophecy ran side by side with the genuine prophecy all through the history of Israel. And it does still. It is interesting that the struggle between the true and the flattering prophets begins with the namesake of Micah in 1 Kings xxii.

6. The punishment of the rapacious rulers misled by the false prophets is a day of darkness and not of light, Lam. ii. 9; Amos v. 18.

7. shall all cover their lips: rather, their beard, or the hair of the upper lip; cf. Lev. xiii. 45; Ezek. xxiv. 17, 22, a sign of mourning and silence. The former reference places these shamed and silenced prophets with lepers. Nowack's suggestion that in that day all prophecy shall cease, true as well as false, only disturbs the force of the passage and the contrast with verse 8.

no answer of God: not specifically Israelitish, says Wellhausen.

8. The splendid assertion of the true prophet's consciousness. His mark is that he does not prophesy smooth things, but declares to the people their sins.

judgement in a subjective sense, yet verse 12 shows him full of judgement in an objective sense too.

might: the moral energy to utter the unpopular word.

9 Israel his sin. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the
house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that
10 abhor judgement, and pervert all equity. They build
11 up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The
heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof
teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for
money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is
not the LORD in the midst of us? no evil shall come
12 upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed

Wellhausen would strike out **by the spirit of the LORD,** because of a grammatical awkwardness. But neither Micah nor we could spare it.

9. He turns again to the rulers. Observe nothing is said of the king, Hezekiah. The evils of the time were clearly faults of the rich and great, of the prophets and the priests, which the king had not the power to control. These deluded men believed that punishment would not come for their iniquities: the inspired prophet assures them that it shall.

10. They build up. A change of *boneh* into *bonei* (Wellhausen) would enable us to avoid the awkward change in person, and read 'building up Zion on "bloods," i. e. murder' (cf. 1 Kings xxi; Jer. xxii. 13 ff.). Rich men increased their wealth by getting their Naboths out of the way (Ezek. xxii. 27). Ecclus. xxxiv. 21, 22 suggests another possible meaning, 'The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that depriveth him thereof is a man of blood. As one that slayeth his neighbour is he that taketh away his living; and as a shedder of blood is he that depriveth a hireling of his hire.'

Zion, the upper city, where the temple stood; **Jerusalem,** the rest of the town.

11. The priests, whose function it was to teach the Torah (Mal. ii. 7), are now taken to task. Hosea, it will be remembered, chiefly attacked them.

divine: the Hebrew word is always used in a bad sense.

Is not the LORD in the midst? For this self-delusion see ii. 7 and Jer. vii. 4, also Jer. v. 12.

12. This terrific doom was postponed on account of the repentance of Hezekiah, Jer. xxvi. 19, the only instance of a definite quotation in the prophetic literature. Yet it was fulfilled by the capture of the city, first in 621 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar (Neh. ii. 17, iv. 2, 10; Lam. v. 18), then in the awful devastation of 70 A.D. by Titus, after which it remained a ruin for fifty years. Is it to be

as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the 4

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fulfilled more literally still, or do the bright promises with which ch. iv opens repeal the doom? During the desolation of the city, after Hadrian had exterminated 580,000 Jews and built Aelia on the site of Jerusalem, R. Akiba smiled when others wept at seeing a fox come out of the Holy of Holies. This prophecy of Micah being fulfilled, he looked the more for the prophecy of good things to come connected therewith.

plowed as a field. Richardson, visiting Jerusalem in the middle of the nineteenth century, records concerning the sacred ground of Zion: 'One part of it supported a crop of barley, another was undergoing the labour of the plough' (Keith on *Prophecy*, p. 257).

heaps: the Aramaic form; in Jer. xxvi. 18 the Hebrew; it means ruins in i. 6.

mountain of the house: the south-east hill, Moriah, where the House of God stood. It was a thicket when Abraham offered Isaac there; it shall be so again.

high places: Wellhausen reads singular with LXX; cf. i. 5. Though the high places were often places of irregular worship, that is not the allusion here. We are only to think of a high hill, like Monte Testaccio in Rome, which marks ruins.

iv. With fine artistic propriety a glowing vision of glory in the end of the days follows on the denunciation of judgement. Commentators, like Wellhausen and Nowack, who are convinced that the book from ch. iv onward comes from another hand and time than Micah's, not only miss the Divine element in a prophetic book, but also a very beautiful human element in the prophetic mind, viz. the blending of threat and promise, as the seer has visions of hope or fear.

Cheyne thinks the original draft was iv. 1–4, 11–13, v. 1–4, 7–15, which should be read together; afterwards the other verses were interpolated.

iv. 1–5. Verses 1–3 are quoted by Isa. ii. 2–4, with very slight variations. It was an oracle which brought the contemporary teachers of the age, Micah and Isaiah, into close harmony. Looking at events from different angles, here was one thing which they saw exactly alike. We know not which quotes the other, or whether both quoted a third, nor do we need to know. Stade's suggestion that the passage belongs to the later Assyrian period, and has been interpolated in both books, obtains the approval of Nowack. But the arguments advanced for this view are purely

mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in
the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above
2 the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many
nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to
the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God
of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will
walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law,

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subjective. Similar quotations from older prophecies probably occur in Isa. xv. 16, and Jer. xlix. 7–22.

1. in the latter days: *lit.* 'the end,' or 'the issue,' of the days. Deut. iv. 30, xxxi. 29; Jer. xxiii. 20, xxx. 24, xlviii. 47, xlix. 39; Ezek. xxxviii. 16; Dan. ii. 28, x. 14; Hos. iii. 5. It means the line which formed the prophet's horizon at the time. A better translation would be 'in the days to come.' Here we may venture to identify it with the time of Christ; elsewhere it points to what the Apostles call the last times. The term is relative to the speaker.

the mountain of the LORD'S house: this phrase serves as the natural link with iii. 12.

established: not for a time, but abidingly, is the meaning of the participle employed, Dan. ii. 44.

at the head **of the mountains** (marg.): the symbolism of the phrase was always understood; e. g. Aben Ezra: 'It is well known that the house of the temple is not high. The meaning then is that its fame shall go forth, and there shall return to it from all quarters persons with offerings, so that it shall be as if it were on the top of all hills, so that all the inhabitants of the earth should see it.' Ps. lxviii. 16; xlviii. 2. So Zech. xiv. 10 and Joel iii. 12 are symbolic.

shall flow: like rivers, like the Nile, the Hebrew word suggests; cf. Jer. xxxi. 12, li. 44.

2. The words of the peoples as they go up to Jerusalem for instruction end with **in his paths.** Jerusalem as the religious metropolis of the world; cf. Isa. xi. 10, lx. 3; Jer. iii. 17; Zech. ii. 11; viii. 22, 23.

of his ways: i. e. those parts of His commandments which are necessary for our present needs; cf. Ps. xciv. 12. The word for **teach** is the verbal root in Torah, law.

the law: better, 'teaching,' for it does not mean the Mosaic Torah, but that instruction given to the seekers from time to time (Deut. xvii. 11), out of which the Mosaic law grew. Cheyne would render 'revelation.'

and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he 3
shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove
strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords
into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks:
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither
shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every 4
man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none
shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of
hosts hath spoken it. For all the peoples will walk 5

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3. When all submit to one Divine law there is a permanent and sufficient Court of Arbitration established, and war becomes unnecessary. Nothing shows better that the Roman Church is not identical with the Divine law than the fact that her unquestioned sway for nearly a thousand years never produced the peace here prophesied. The reign of peace will only begin when the Prince of Peace, and he alone, is allowed to give instruction to the nations.

between: cf. Isa. v. 3.

reprove: rather, as in marg., 'decide concerning.' The supreme Judge decides.

plowshares: Isa. ii. 4; Joel iii. 10. The Hebrew word is not beyond dispute, but the old versions rendered it thus. In 1 Sam. xiii. 20 it is rendered 'coulter.'

4. We here leave the words common to Isaiah and Micah. When war ceases men can enjoy their own. Apparently the social oppressions denounced in ch. iii have also ceased. Peace abroad brings peace at home; as war abroad is the great argument for postponing domestic reforms. The Palestinian image for peace, corresponding to our sitting by our hearth, is basking under the vine and fig, 1 Kings iv. 25; 2 Kings xviii. 31; Zech. iii. 10. It is specially suitable on the lips of Micah the countryman.

the mouth of the LORD, &c. This idyllic peace and rest for which the world sighs can only result from a revelation, a teaching, from God.

5. will walk. This verse is, as translated, obviously inconsistent with verse 2. Nowack suggests that it was added by the interpolator of verses 1–3. But Wellhausen's rendering makes the verse a comment on the foregoing, which sets the present in contrast with the promised future: 'all the nations walk (as yet) in the name of their god, but we will walk in the name of Yahweh,'

every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in
the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.
6 In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that
halteth, and I will gather her that is driven away, and
7 her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that
halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong
nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount
8 Zion from henceforth even for ever. And thou, O tower

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sc. until the day when all the nations will say, Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, verse 2.

Unfortunately the Hebrew verb has not a constant usage of tenses which enables us to fix a temporal point. Here the tense is the imperfect or future; and it is not the obvious meaning to render 'walk' instead of 'will walk.' Grammatically it might be 'let all the nations walk in the name of their gods, yet we will walk,' &c., but that would not bring the verse into harmony with the preceding.

Pusey quotes Jer. ii. 11, and says that Israel must be as constant to his God as the heathen are to theirs before the desired consummation can come. But this neither suits the grammar nor the context. Perhaps the simple explanation is, that a brilliant prospect like that of verses 1–3 came to the prophet in a flash, and, too bright to last, faded rapidly into the more sober prospect of verse 5. Micah had not yet conceived the idea of Yahweh being the God of all the earth, and the venerable idolatries of the nations vanished away. And have we yet conceived, or believingly grasped it?

iv. 6–8. These verses have no connexion with verses 1–5, and yet, pieced on to them, they make a beautiful completion of the picture. They seem to assume, as ii. 12, 13 did, that the Exile has taken place, and this is the promise of return. Indeed the words of verse 6 are imitated by Zeph. iii. 19, and remind us of Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

6. In that day: i. e. in the Messianic age, verse 1.

7. a remnant: i. e. the remnant to which the Messianic promises belong, v. 6, 7. This implies a distinct eschatological conception which one is inclined to think later than Micah.

her that halted . . . and . . . was cast off is not a section of the people, but the whole body of exiles.

henceforth: viz. from that time, equivalent therefore to 'thenceforth.' For the Lord's reign cf. Isa. xxiv. 23, lii. 7.

8. This announces the restoration of the kingship in Jerusalem. It is hard to think that Micah, writing in the days of Hezekiah,

of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come; yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why dost 9

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would speak of restoring what had not yet been destroyed. The verse must be later than his time.

tower of the flock. It is assumed that Zion is laid waste (as in iii. 12); shepherds watch their flocks and build their tower for shelter and observation on mount Zion. The expression, *Migdal Eder*, occurs in Gen. xxxv. 21 as a place where Jacob fed his flock, but there can be no reference to this, as this tower is defined as the *Ophel* (see marg.), the hill on mount Zion. The word *Ophel* is used for the south-east peak of the temple hill (2 Chron. xxvii. 3, xxxiii. 14; Neh. iii. 26, xi. 21). Here it is used as in Isa. xxxii. 14, simply as 'a hill.' The *Migdal Eder* was, however, even in Jerome's time identified as a place 1,000 paces from Bethlehem, and the Rabbis drew from this passage the inference, 'This is the place where in the last days Messiah shall be revealed.' This tempts Pusey to identify the tower of the flock with Bethlehem, and to see here a prophecy of Christ's birth there (cf. v. 2). But it is always precarious to read Messianic prophecies into enigmatic passages.

the former dominion: that is, the pre-exilic kingship; LXX even adds 'out of Babylon.'

the daughter of Jerusalem. Wellhausen would expect 'daughter of Israel.'

iv. 9, 10 present a different picture. They belong to a time before the Exile. They foretell the Exile, but also the deliverance from it. They should be printed in a paragraph alone, with asterisks between what precedes and what follows. Prof. G. A. Smith attaches verse 8 to them, and treats 'tower of the flock' as a figure of Jerusalem isolated and besieged. But this gives us the impossible collocation of a promise of restoration in verse 8, followed by the threat of exile in verse 10. If, on the other hand, verses 9, 10 are treated as a separate oracle, it might be placed in Hezekiah's time, or later, when Nebuchadnezzar was threatening Jerusalem. Its only obscurity is its context. In itself it is clear and rich in comfort.

why dost thou (*sc.* daughter of Zion) **cry out aloud?** Cf. Isa. xxii. 2, 5. This might be uttered in the days of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib's host was attacking Jerusalem, 701 B. C. But in this case we should have to regard the clause, 'shalt come even unto Babylon,' as an interpolation. It is better therefore to date the oracle later than Micah, when the threat of Babylonian and not of Assyrian conquest was on the horizon.

thou cry out aloud? Is there no king in thee, is thy
counsellor perished, that pangs have taken hold of thee
10 as of a woman in travail? Be in pain, and labour to
bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail:
for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and shalt
dwell in the field, and shalt come even unto Babylon;
there shalt thou be rescued; there shall the LORD
11 redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. And now

Is there no king? implying that the people were seeking foreign aid, Isa. xix. 11, xxxvi. 5.

thy counsellor: synonym for 'king'; the root *mélech*, 'king,' in Aramaic means 'to counsel'; cf. Isa. ix. 6.

woman in travail: Jer. vi. 24, xxii. 23; Hos. xiii. 13. The comparison is only with the pain, not with the fruit, of the birth-pangs.

10. Be in pain, &c. The stress is again only on the pain. The image of the bringing forth of children is not pressed: on the contrary, so far from bringing forth children, the daughter of Zion is herself to go forth into exile.

labour to bring forth. The word elsewhere means breaking out, like water (Job xl. 23, 'swell'), or of an ambush (Judges xx. 33), or of a lion from the reeds (Ezek. xxxii. 2). The meaning may be, in disregard of the image, 'break forth' into the Exile.

come even unto Babylon. As Nowack points out, the passage as a whole might well be Micah's; it is parallel to Hos. ii. 16–20 in thought. But Micah could hardly have written 'unto Babylon,' which was not on his political horizon. Babylon only succeeded to the place of Nineveh a century later, and the transportation described in 2 Kings xvii. 24, and confirmed by the Annals of Sargon (*Records of the Past*, vii. 29), would hardly suggest the phrase to Micah, except by such a direct and miraculous revelation (Pusey, of course, explains it in this way) as we could only defend if we had far stronger evidence than we possess that the contents of a prophetic book were written by the prophet who gives to the book his name.

there shalt thou be rescued: one of the richest of evangelic promises.

iv. 11–13 constitute a little oracle which is attached not unnaturally to the bright promise of verse 10, or perhaps, as Cheyne suggests, it originally followed on verse 4. The tables are turned, Zion triumphs over her enemies. Observe the resemblance to Joel iii. 16–21, and to the time of Ezekiel.

many nations are assembled against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye see *its desire* upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither 12
understand they his counsel: for he hath gathered them as the sheaves to the threshing-floor. Arise and thresh, 13
O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples: and thou shalt devote their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. Now shalt thou gather thyself in 5

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11. now. This introduction implies a contrast with what had been previously said; cf. iv. 9 and v. 1.

many nations: all those neighbour peoples—Edom, Ammon, Moab, Philistia—who so pitilessly rejoiced in the fall of Jerusalem and the Captivity in Babylon; cf. Obadiah.

defiled: not only by her iniquities (as Ps. cvi. 38; Isa. xxiv. 5), but now by the desolation which is their punishment.

see its desire **upon.** This is exactly illustrated by Obad. 12–14.

12. they know not: cf. Isa. lv. 8. These nations in their temporary triumph little know that Yahweh gathers them together, not to triumph over Israel as they think, but to be threshed out by their hated adversary.

for: *chi*, should be rendered 'that.'

13. Arise and thresh. What a contrast to 'be in pain and labour' addressed to the same daughter of Zion in verse 10. Evidently tracts of time lie between the paragraphs.

thine horn iron. Threshing was done either by oxen treading out the sheaves (Deut. xxv. 4), or by wheels of iron, or boards set with sharp flints. For the figure cf. Isa. xli. 15; Jer. li. 33.

thou shalt devote their gain unto Yahweh: not as marg. says, 'I will devote'; it is the old form of second person singular (Wellhausen).

their gain: *sc.* their accumulated spoil.

Lord of the whole earth. Adon, not Yahweh here: the distinction is lost in our English version, because Yahweh is rendered 'Lord.'

For the 'devoting' cf. Joshua vi. 18, 24. For the idea cf. Zech. xiv. 14.

v. **1.** This verse stands by itself, and is a third picture of Jerusalem in siege. It might well be written by Micah; and is as near to verses 9, 10 as it is far from 11–13.

troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

2 But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to

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in troops: *sc.* marauding bands, and Jerusalem is addressed as the daughter of such bands. She was full of robberies. Her troops also were bent on other evil, Jer. v. 7. She is 'gathered in troops' now for destruction; cf. 2 Chron. xxv. 12. Nowack, however, would translate the verb 'tear thyself,' *sc.* in mourning.

shall smite: for this indignity to the king of the time referred to, cf. 1 Kings xxii. 24; Job xvi. 10.

Israel applied to Judah; cf. i. 13. Pusey thinks the prophecy refers to the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. To Pusey and the old commentators all things were possible: inspiration was a Divine freak, freed from all historical or psychological conditions. We are bound to keep within more sober interpretations. If Micah saw the fall of Samaria, we may reasonably think that he foresaw the fall of Jerusalem and the indignity put on Zedekiah the captive king. But to have foreseen the Roman siege hundreds of years later, and to have described it in these enigmatical and inconclusive terms, could have served no spiritual purpose then, as its questionable elucidation by Pusey serves no spiritual purpose now. Cheyne, on the other hand, closely connects verse 1 with verse 2, thus: The daughter of troops is the invading Assyrian; who besieges Jerusalem and insults the king, but the ruler in Israel shall issue from Beth-lehem (see *Cambridge Bible*, in loc.). This is a very attractive suggestion of our most ingenious commentator.

v. 2–9 a grand Apocalyptic picture.

2–4. This great Messianic prophecy was always reckoned Messianic by the Jews until Christ was born in Beth-lehem, when the difficult task of explaining it away had to begin. The Jewish fable that Messiah *was* born at Beth-lehem on the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, but was hidden for the sins of the people, was composed to meet the objection of Tertullian and other Christian writers that, since none of David's race were then left at Beth-lehem, this prophecy of Micah could not now be fulfilled—if Jesus was not Messiah.

Beth-lehem Ephrathah: i. e. Beth-lehem in the district of Ephrathah, Joshua xv. 59; 1 Sam. xvii. 12; Ruth i. 2 (LXX). The gloss in Gen. xxxv. 19, xlviii. 7, which identifies the Ephrathah of Rachel's burying-place in Benjamin with Beth-lehem in Judah, is best explained by the fact that Beth-lehem was in a district named Ephrathah. The modern tendency, approved even

be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore 3 will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his

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by Prof. G. A. Smith, to strike out Beth-lehem and read Beth-Ephrath, is absolutely gratuitous (see A. C. Welch, *Expos. Times*, xiii. 235); it is derived merely from the reading of LXX, 'And thou, Beth-lehem, house of Ephratha.'

The names are richly significant: Beth-lehem, 'House of Bread,' and Ephrathah, 'Fruitful.' Beth-lehem, in spite of Turkish misrule, is fruitful still. Beth-lehem was David's city; naturally Messianic hopes centred on it, insignificant as it was; so insignificant as not to be mentioned in Joshua xv. 59, where the LXX inserted it.

little to be among, &c.: not 'too small,' which the grammar does not allow.

thousands: the name for the smallest district, rather like our 'hundred.' Gideon belonged to the poorest 'thousand' in Manasseh, Judges vi. 15: see Num. i. 16, x. 4; Joshua xxii. 14.

unto me: rather, 'for me'; Yahweh is speaking.

ruler recalls iv. 8. Indeed, our prophecy here connects itself easily with iv. 6-8, while iv. 9—v. 1 is a series of interpolations.

whose goings forth. The thought is of David, whose history seemed to be in a far past: Messiah was conceived of as a David *redivivus*, Ezek. xxxiv. 23, xxxvii. 24; Hos. iii. 5. Nowack cannot understand how Micah could think of David as in so dim an antiquity, and dates the passage in the Exile. But the solemn addition **from everlasting** gives a deeper tone to the prophecy, which might come as easily to Micah as to any later prophet; it shows that Messiah will not be only David restored, but One who was in the beginning with God. We are not called on to explain away this solemn and wonderful forecast, especially when we have seen it fulfilled in the Babe of Beth-lehem, who came into the world out of the bosom of the Father. Micah could not understand his own deep saying; but how foolish of us to discredit it when history has made its meaning plain!

3. Therefore will he give them up: i. e. Yahweh will deliver Israel into the hands of its foes. Verse 3 is a commentary on the prophecy which definitely refers to two prophecies of Isaiah, the virgin bringing forth her son (Isa. vii. 14), and the return of the remnant (Isa. xi. 12).

then the residue of his brethren: rather, 'and until the remnant,' &c. 'The verse offers us,' says A. C. Welch (*Expos. Times*, xiii. 235), 'an early example of Jewish exegesis and an

4 brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And
he shall stand, and shall feed *his flock* in the strength of
the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his
God: and they shall abide; for now shall he be great
5 unto the ends of the earth. And this *man* shall be *our*

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illustration of how prophecy was interpreted.' When this verse was inserted, the passages in Isaiah were already classical, and the object was to bring them into relation with the Messianic prophecy of Micah. The 'he' must be Yahweh.

his brethren: *sc.* Messiah's. 'The remnant shall return,' says Isaiah (Isa. xi. 12; Hos. iii. 5). This little commentary acquires deep significance if one realizes the exiles in Babylon poring over the utterances of Isaiah and Micah. 'When shall the ruler come out of Beth-lehem and feed his flock, as Micah said?' 'It will not be until, as Isaiah said, the virgin conceives, until the remnant returns.' Every verse of Scripture has been enriched by the search and the tears, the questions and the aspirations of readers trying to draw water from the wells of salvation.

4. he shall stand: *sc.* Messiah. Isa. lxi. 5 for the shepherd standing.

in the majesty of the name: cf. Isa. xxx. 27. This language agrees with the presentation of Christ in John's gospel as the Good Shepherd, and yet the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And this unique suitability of the phrases to the historic Messiah appears still more strikingly in the closing words **now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth,** with which cf. Ps. ii. 8, lxxii. 8. Messiah's kingdom will be far greater than the Assyrian.

That the prophet spoke greater things than he knew must be admitted. He was awakening a Messianic hope which lived and grew until Christ came, and when Christ came received an extraordinary and inconceivable fulfilment. But so far as we can see, what was present to his own mind was only a ruler arising out of the little country town, fourteen miles over the hill from his native place, a ruler, not from the capital, but from the people, who would wisely govern his people. Accordingly, from the great and mystical forecast, which to us is rich with spiritual significance, he turns to the almost prosaic and strictly national politics of his time. The Messiah whom he has foretold, who actually was to be the Saviour of the world, fades into the light of common day, and is simply the leader who shall deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrian, a mere Hezekiah, or his like.

5. And this man shall be our peace. Prof. G. A. Smith

peace: when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, 6 and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: and

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makes this clause the close of verse 4. This is very tempting, cf. Isa. ix. 6; Eph. ii. 14. There is no Messianic description with which we more readily or thankfully identify our Lord Jesus Christ. We would rather therefore draw it to the description of the Ideal that has just been sketched, than to the more immediate description of Assyrian invasion and deliverance which follows.

when the Assyrian. Pusey, to secure the Messianic reference in verses 2–4, takes this allegorically: the Assyrian is simply Satan, or the opponent of Christ's Church. But considering the historical situation in Micah's time, the Assyrian destroying Israel, and threatening Judah, we cannot execute this *tour de force*. Micah, as a seer, saw farther than he knew; but, so far as he knew, he was foretelling the advent of a leader who would deliver Judah from the impending Assyrian invasion.

palaces: LXX reads a similar Hebrew word meaning 'lands,' which is more probable.

seven shepherds: the relation of the seven shepherds to the one Messiah is unexplained (for seven and eight as an indefinite number, cf. Amos i. 3); this division of the deliverer's function into seven and eight (cf. Isa. xxxii. 1) remains unexplained, because, so far as we know, the prophecy had no exact fulfilment. Certainly no Jewish leaders ever wasted the land of Assyria literally. Wellhausen thinks these numbers rank the passage with the later Apocalyptic, of which the Book of Daniel is our greatest example. 'The older prophecy,' he says, 'does not love chiaroscuro, or give the appearance of knowing more intimately the details of the future than it actually does.'

6. waste the land: *lit.* 'feed off.' These leaders are thought of as shepherds who shepherd the enemy's land with a sword, *sc.* instead of a crook. Cf. Jer. vi. 3; Ezek. xxxiv. 18, for shepherding in this bad sense.

land of Nimrod: Babylon, Gen. x. 9f., but, as Gen. x. 11 shows, it includes Assyria.

in the entrances thereof. Nowack endeavours to show from Ps. xxxvii. 14; Ezek. xxi. 28 that the Hebrew word here may be rendered 'with swords.' But Nah. iii. 13 explains 'entrances.'

he shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh
7 into our land, and when he treadeth within our border. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from the LORD, as showers
8 upon the grass; that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples,

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he shall deliver us: we should expect 'they shall,' but evidently it goes back to the one shepherd of verse 4.

Certainly the reference to the Assyrian makes it probable that these verses are Micah's. But this Wellhausen and Nowack seek to evade by saying that Assyrian is used for Babylon (Lam. v. 6), for Persia (Ezra vi. 22), and even for Syria (Ps. lxxxiii. 8); cf. also Zech. x. 11. But this seems as far-fetched in one direction as Pusey's contention is in the other.

7–9 form another little oracle in which Israel, or the remnant, is a Messiah to the world, quite distinct from what goes before and after. The expectation of a Jewish world-dominion is, Wellhausen thinks, late (Isa. xlix. 22–26, lx. 12; Zech. xiv. 17), and no trace of it is found in the assured writings of Isaiah. But obviously if iv. 1–3 and v. 2–4 are Micah's, this passage may be his too.

the remnant: iv. 7; this is the common thought of Isaiah, e. g. Isa. x. 21. There will be a remnant of the people saved, and they will be blessed and a blessing.

as dew . . . as showers. Nowack thinks the point is, that these natural phenomena are God's work, and not man's, and that the dew and raindrops are innumerable. But this is very unimaginative. Dew in Palestine during the hot months was the only source of life and refreshment for plants, and thus it was an exquisite image of Divine truth and teaching, cf. Deut. xxxii. 2; and so in Ecclus. xviii. 16, 'Shall not the dew assuage the scorching heat? So is a word better than a gift'; and xliii. 22, 'A mist coming speedily is the healing of all things; a dew coming after heat shall bring cheerfulness.'

We cannot help taking the image therefore to mean that Israel will be a teacher in the midst of the nations. This it has been, especially in the form of Christianity. At the same time, the concluding clause of the verse emphasizes the fact that Israel's message to the world is not from man or of man; it comes, the grace of God, the marvellous announcement of salvation, through a chosen people, but from God. The verse acquires its full meaning when we read Gal. i. 12.

as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and there is none 9
to deliver. Let thine hand be lifted up above thine adversaries, and let all thine enemies be cut off.

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, 10
that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and will destroy thy chariots: and I will cut off the 11
cities of thy land, and will throw down all thy strong

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8. as a lion. It is certainly a strange contrast to the gentle dew, and the fierce note of triumph in verse 9, where it is not so much a wish as an assurance, seems inconsistent with the beneficent presence of Israel as the dew among nations. But God himself is compared to a lion by Amos iii. 8, and the severity of the Divine nature, mingling with its tenderness (cf. Rev. v. 5, vi. 16), may well be reproduced in the people of God. We need not therefore surrender our interpretation of the dew because the remnant of Israel is to be like a lion as well.

9. Let thine hand be lifted up: Jacob is addressed. Lifted up, as contrasted with the hand hanging down in weakness and ineffectiveness, Exod. xiv. 8; Deut. xxxii. 27; Isa. xxvi. 11.

v. 10-15. Here we return to the indisputable Micah; it is an echo of chs. i-iii. The passage might easily follow on i. 7. Its early date is shown by this: it does not refer to the 'high places,' as a post-Deuteronomic writing would, but only to the images and Mazzeboth and Asheras, the idolatrous symbols that were reared in the scattered shrines before the centralization of the cultus. Nor is it certain that even these are censured. They are to be destroyed along with other external helps, horses and chariots and cities, divinations and soothsayings. Micah does not, like Hosea and Amos, attack the religious practices of his day, but the irreligion which went with those practices. These verses may, however, be closely connected with 2-9, as a description of the Messianic time when the implements of war and of idolatry will be alike abolished, and the enemies of the Lord will be vanquished (Introd.).

10. horses, like the **chariots,** used in war. Deut. xvii. 16, xx. 1; Isa. ii. 7, xxx. 16, xxx. 1-5; Zech. ix. 10.

11. cities: i. e. the walled towns (cf. Hos. viii. 14) in contrast with the unwalled villages, Ezek. xxxviii. 11.

strong holds: Isa. ii. 15, xxx. 25, as well as Hos. viii. 14.

12 holds: and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand;
13 and thou shalt have no *more* soothsayers: and I will cut
off thy graven images and thy pillars out of the midst of
thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine
14 hands. And I will pluck up thine Asherim out of the
15 midst of thee: and I will destroy thy cities. And I will
execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations
which hearkened not.

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12. witchcrafts out of thine hand: evidently some divining objects, rods, crystals or what not, held in the hand.

soothsayers: or 'diviners of the clouds,' which were studied in Chaldea for the purposes of divination; cf. Isa. ii. 6, viii. 19. Micah does not, like Isaiah, denounce these aids as illegitimate; he only says that as aids they shall be cut off. The prophecy may be taken as a denunciation, or as an evangelic promise.

13. graven images: there is nothing here of Isaiah's iconoclasm (Isa. xxx. 22, xxxi. 7); we should not know from this passage that graven images were forbidden any more than horses or cities.

pillars: the Mazzeboth, and the wooden figures of the goddess Asherah, the Assyrian Ishtar, called Asherim, parts of the ancient cultus of Palestine, were probably admitted, from old custom, until Josiah's reform. While the local sanctuaries survived the pillars were permitted, for they were the marks or symbols of the sanctuary. Hosea does not condemn them (iii. 4). Isaiah sanctions them (xix. 19). And so Jacob set up and anointed the pillar for the sanctuary at Beth-el. But Deuteronomy is explicit against them (Deut. xvi. 21, 22, xxvii. 15), and so is Jeremiah; still more the later legislation (e. g. Exod. xxiii. 24, xxxiv. 13; Lev. xxvi. 1).

14. cities. Nowack would read '*Atzabbeika*, 'images,' citing 2 Chron. xxiv. 18, where the word is used alongside of 'Asherim.' Cheyne renders the word 'enemies.'

Amos said that God would punish Israel as well as the nations (Amos i. 2); Micah says He will punish the nations as well as Israel. It is not necessary to assign this verse to a later date, because the punishment of the nations became familiar in the later prophecy, Isa. lx. 12; Zech. xiv. 17; Joel iii. 9. Pusey takes the view that these verses bear an evangelic burden; war and fenced cities shall cease (cf. Zech. ii. 4, 5); idolatrous practices shall disappear. Only the heathen shall be punished. It is a picture of the cleansing of the Church and the wrath of God resting on the wicked.

Hear ye now what the LORD saith: Arise, contend 6
thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy
voice. Hear, O ye mountains, the LORD'S controversy, 2
and ye enduring foundations of the earth: for the LORD
hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead
with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? 3

vi. 1–8. This great utterance has been called 'the most important in the prophetic literature'; it closes with a definition of religion which is 'the greatest saying of the Old Testament.' The tenderness of the plea reminds us of Hosea, the appeal to argument reminds us of the wisdom-literature. It thus seems to epitomize the teaching of the Old Testament, as it prepares us for the revelation of the New. It finally answers the question, What is true religion? But the further question, How it can be realized, was not answered until Christ, 'whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting,' appeared with the invitation and the promise, 'Come unto me—learn of me—I will give you rest.'

1. Arise, contend thou. Wellhausen says the prophet is addressed as Yahweh's plenipotentiary. He is to stand before the court and urge Yahweh's case against the erring people. The steadfast and everlasting hills that gaze on the generations of human folly and sin stand as the judges; just as in Isa. i. 2 heaven and earth are appealed to for a verdict against man; cf. Deut. xxxii. 1.

2. Yahweh has said to the prophet, Arise and state My case; immediately he obeys and addresses the hills.

enduring: this is very fine in the English, but the Hebrew word is not used elsewhere in quite this sense; Wellhausen therefore is justified in the conjectural change, 'and give ear, O foundations of the earth.'

contend and **controversy** are the same word in Hebrew.

plead: the reflexive form would be better rendered by 'argue' (Prof. G. A. Smith), for Yahweh has condescended to leave the judgement-seat and to come down into the arena and open an argument with His people, to hear and to speak.

3. O my people. This one tender word, repeated in verse 5, contains a whole volume of reproof, and gives deep emotion to the argument. Yahweh does not mention His people's sin, but asks only what have been His faults!

The 'wearying' might be through making too hard demands, Isa. xliii. 22–24, or by unfulfilled promises. Jer. ii. 31, but neither complaint could be made against Him. When this prophecy was made the endless and burdensome regulations of the Jewish law were not elaborated; and such demands as the Mosaic law did

and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.
4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and
redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent
5 before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people,
remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and
what Balaam the son of Beor answered him; *remember*
from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous
6 acts of the LORD. Wherewith shall I come before the
LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I

---

make were here brushed aside in favour of strictly moral and religious requirements.

testify against me: reason, justice, so this great prophecy implies, regulates the relations between man and his God. Yahweh's dealings with His people had not been exigent, but redemptive all along.

4. the house of bondage: so Deut. v. 6, vi. 12, vii. 8; also Exod. xiii. 3, 14, xx. 2 (J E); so once in Jer. xxxiv. 13.

Aaron: Exod. iv. 14, 27–30.

Miriam: Exod. xv. 20, whose timbrel then led the grateful praise of ransomed Israel. M. Dieulafoi, in his *David the King*, p. 32, shows how in the nomad life women are often commanders and generals, like Miriam or Deborah.

5. Cf. Num. xxii–xxiv. If Balaam had cursed, the curse would have fallen; so it is implied. But the **righteous acts**, *lit.* 'righteousnesses,' of Yahweh (a remarkable expression; cf. vii. 9; Judges v. 11; 1 Sam. xii. 7; Ps. xl. 10, xxxvi. 10, li. 14) closed his lips.

consulted: Num. xxii. 4.

remember now: a tender mode of appeal, says Pusey, like our 'do now remember.' Yahweh might command, but He pleads, that He may win.

from Shittim unto Gilgal: struck out as a gloss by Wellhausen and Prof. G. A. Smith. Ewald thought the words a reference mark to the passage in Numbers containing the story of Balaam. This is quite improbable. Shittim was the last station before the entry into Canaan (Hos. ix. 10; Joel iii. 18), and Gilgal the first in the promised land, where the reproach of Egypt was 'rolled' away. The story of Balaam could not be inserted between these two. If we retain the words, Yahweh's plea concentrates attention on the marvels of the crossing of the Jordan and the first entrance into the land which He had given them.

6. Now Israel speaks. He means well. He is ignorant. He has tried to obey the law, bringing the year-old calves as he

come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of 7
rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, 8

understood Yahweh demanded, Lev. ix. 2, 3. This reminds us again of Hos. iv. 1, 6, &c.[1].

The desire of the people to know what is required, and their readiness to offer the extraordinary sacrifices, including even the firstborn, looks, so says Nowack, more like the time of Manasseh than that of Ahaz and Hezekiah. But, as Wellhausen says, that does not preclude Micah's authorship.

bow myself implies deep reverence: Isa. xxxiii. 5, lvii. 15. The idea of Yahweh being high and removed from the people for their sins is found in Hos. v. 15; Isa. xviii. 4; see i. 3.

burnt offerings: not sin offerings which, as Nowack points out, belong to the time after Ezekiel, and to the Priestly Code. The year-old calves, Lev. ix. 3.

7. The people would bring more than was strictly demanded, such hecatombs as Solomon offered, 1 Kings viii. 63, or other kings, 2 Chron. xxx. 24, xxxv. 7.

rivers of oil. (Cf. Job xx. 17 for the expression.) Oil was used in all the meal offerings (Lev. ii. 1, 2, 4–7, vii. 10, 12), and so was needed for the sacrifices, Exod. xxix. 2, 23, 40; Lev. vi. 15, 21; Num. viii. 8. But we do not, as Wellhausen says, know any occasion in the cultus for oil in rivers. It is the exaggeration into which a formal and materialistic religion usually runs. Nowack thinks that in the earlier cultus oil may have been used in this wholesale way (*Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Archäologie*, ii. 208 f.).

my firstborn: 2 Kings xvi. 3 shows how this was done in extreme peril. But Ewald thinks the reference brings the passage down to the time of Manasseh, who offered one of his sons, 2 Kings xxi. 2 f.; afterwards the practice became common, Jer. vii. 31, xix. 4–6; Ezek. xvi. 20, xx. 26. See also Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2; 2 Kings xxiii. 10; Isa. lvii. 5.

8. All these exaggerated and extravagant offerings do not avail. Yahweh demands not that men come *with* things to offer, but that they offer themselves; cf. Isa. i. 10–15 and Hos. vi. 6.

He hath shewed thee: Deut. x. 12, 13. The prophetic

[1] Bishop Butler, not realizing the rapid changes in the *loquiturs* of the prophet, thought verses 6, 7 was Balak's question and verse 8 Balaam's answer. Colour was given to this by 2 Kings iii. 27, where another king of Moab offers up his firstborn.

what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

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knowledge of God stands over against the ritual and the offerings, not perhaps to supersede them, but certainly announcing itself as indispensable, if they are to avail. Wellhausen quotes Deut. xxx. 11–14; Matt. xxv. 40; John iv. 24.

O man: this individualizes and makes religion personal; it universalizes and extends it to all men.

what doth the LORD require? Not the sacrifices and offerings, which are of no moral worth, but a certain state of the soul and a correspondent course of life, covered by the words justice, mercy, and humility.

to do justly: this Amos had taught, e. g. Amos v. 24.

to love mercy: this Hosea had added, e. g. Hos. vi. 6, viii. 13. Micah adds an idea which is all his own, viz. **to walk humbly with thy God.** The phrase, *hatzne'a leketh*, is unique; only in one other place does the verb occur, and it is there in an adjectival form, and is rendered 'the lowly' (Prov. xi. 2). In Aramaic the verbal root means to be hidden, and in the feminine it applies to a modest bride. The idea, therefore, is that kind of inward and secret submission to God which is exhibited e. g. in the *Imitatio Christi*. It is the exact opposite of 'the pride of Israel' rebuked by Amos vi. 8, viii. 7, and Hos. v. 5, vii. 10.

The significance of this crucial passage is pointed out by Duhm (*Theology of the Prophets*, p. 186). It marks the decisive contrast between the popular conception of God, and that which it was the function of the prophets to teach. 'To the people God was an unlimited despot, ruling arbitrarily, whose wrath, temper, blood-thirst, must be propitiated with costly gifts, and even with the offering of oneself or of one's dearest possession.' In the books of Judges and Samuel that is the notion of God that prevails. Micah does not compromise with this conception, or attempt to modify it; he sweeps it away. Yahweh is a moral being, and He demands a moral offering from the heart of His worshippers. We cannot wonder that the O. T. writers, and even the prophets themselves, did not always remain at the height of this great argument: for after nineteen centuries of Christian teaching, a large number of people, and even some theological writers, still hold the old view of God; orthodox theology seldom ventures, with the boldness of Micah, to brush aside the rudimentary conceptions of God which prevail in the O. T., or, with a frank acceptance of the N. T. revelation, to avow that God is a moral being who demands a moral service, and therefore nothing which we count immoral must for a moment be attributed to Him; nor

The voice of the LORD crieth unto the city, and *the* 9
man of wisdom will see thy name: hear ye the rod, and
who hath appointed it. Are there yet the treasures of 10
wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant
measure that is abominable? Shall I be pure with 11

can we, by any service which violates the principles of morality, bring to Him an acceptable offering.

vi. 9–16. Yahweh's complaint of the dishonest practices which prevailed in business, and His denunciation of the judgements which must fall upon them.

From here to the end of the book 'the state of the text is as confused as the condition of society which it describes' (Prof. G. A. Smith). And yet, while the details are obscure, nothing could be plainer than the teaching.

9. The prophet calls attention to the voice of Yahweh speaking to the city, *sc.* Jerusalem. For the crying cf. Prov. viii. 1, 3, 4; the whole passage echoes the wisdom-literature. The second clause is difficult, and must be taken as a parenthesis. By slight corrections of the text we get the sense: ''Tis salvation or wisdom (cf. Prov. ii. 7, xviii. 1; Job v. 12, where it is translated 'enterprise,' for the word[1]) to fear[2] thy name.' The third clause defies grammatical interpretation. Our English translation is a *tour de force*, for 'rod' is masculine, and yet the suffix of the verb is feminine. Wellhausen, by the help of the LXX, and by drawing the *'od* with which verse 10 begins into verse 9 as *'ir*, obtains the pertinent sense: 'Hear, O tribe (*sc.* Judah), and council of the city.' For this we may be grateful, but we cannot know that it is what Micah wrote. If we keep the text, the 'rod' must mean the Assyrian, and approaching judgement.

10. The text is confused. Wellhausen turns the **Are there** into a verb meaning 'shall I overlook' (Lam. iii. 17); this only involves supplying the letter *h* in the Hebrew.

scant measure: *lit.* 'ephah,' a measure of six bushels; see Deut. xxv. 14, 16; Amos viii. 5, where the word **abominable** also appears in the same connexion.

11. Shall I be pure: the verb should be active, so Jerome, *numquid iustificabo?* We must supply the object by the altered vocalization: 'Shall I regard as pure (one) with wicked balances?' For the balances, weights and the bag to hold them, see Lev. xix. 36; Deut. xxv. 13; Prov. xvi. 11.

[1] The word is derived from *jesh*, and means 'that which really is.'

[2] If the word 'see' is retained we must compare Jer. ii. 31 and Exod. xx. 18.

wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights?
12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the
inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is
13 deceitful in their mouth. Therefore I also have smitten
thee with a grievous wound; I have made thee desolate
14 because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be
satisfied; and thy humiliation shall be in the midst of
thee: and thou shalt remove, but shalt not carry away
safe; and that which thou carriest away will I give up to
15 the sword. Thou shalt sow, but shalt not reap: thou

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12. thereof: *sc.* of the city. Prof. G. A. Smith tries to get the feminine pronoun into verses 10, 11, that the 'thereof' may be more intelligible. The verses are much dislocated.

deceitful: the Hebrew word is found only in the Psalms.

13. a grievous wound: the word used by Nahum iii. 19 to Nineveh. A better rendering is Wellhausen's: 'And I for my part have begun to plague thee.'

thee is masculine here, perhaps the individual inhabitant of the city.

14. humiliation: better, 'emptiness' (cf. Lev. xxvi. 25, 26; Deut. xxviii. 39), a word only used here. But *jeshach* may be paralleled by the modern colloquial Arabic *waḥsha*, 'longing for an absent friend' (Prof. G. A. Smith). Pusey's interesting quotation from the Commentary of Arias Montanus on the Minor Prophets, date 1571, shows how exactly the conditions of the eighth century B.C. correspond to those of the sixteenth century A.D., and how little they differ from those of the twentieth century A.D.: 'Upon extreme but ill-gotten abundance there followeth extreme want. And whoso seeth not this in our ways and our times is absolutely blind. For in no period have we ever read that there was so much gold and silver, or so much discomfort and indigence, so that those most true words of Christ Jesus seem to have been especially spoken of us, *Take heed, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*'

thou shalt remove (the word used Deut. xix. 14, xxvii. 17; Hos. v. 10 for removing boundaries): unintelligible, says Wellhausen; evidently we must supply as an object persons, e. g. thy wife and children, because they are given to the sword.

The situation seems to be that of a besieged and starving town; cf. Lev. xxvi. 25; 2 Kings vi. 25; Jer. lii. 6. Jer. xliv. 12 is more explicit still.

15. The enemy takes Judah's harvest, Amos v. 11; cf. Lev.

shalt tread the olives, but shalt not anoint thee with oil; and the vintage, but shalt not drink the wine. For the 16
statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels: that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing; and ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

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xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 30, 38, 41. For the oil obtained by treading the olives, see Deut. xxviii. 40.

> 'He weaves and is clothed with derision,
> He sows and he shall not reap;
> His life is a watch and a vision
> Between a sleep and a sleep' (Swinburne).

16. statutes of Omri: *sc.* the worship of Baal, 1 Kings xvi. 31, 32. Omri, the father of Ahab, and founder of a powerful dynasty in Samaria. How great he was appears from the Assyrian inscriptions, in which Jehu is described as the son of Omri and the Kingdom of Israel is called Bit Khumri, 'place of Omri.' Scripture speaks of the great potentate with contempt, 1 Kings xvi. 25. LXX oddly puts 'Zimri.' Statutes, in a religious sense (Lev. xx. 8; 2 Kings xvii. 34; Jer. x. 3).

are kept. Wellhausen alters into 'thou keepest,' and **ye walk** into 'thou walkest.' Then **make thee** is straightforward. But even so we have the awkward **thereof** again, referring to the city which had not been mentioned since verse 12.

works of... Ahab: the Baal cultus, but as Micah does not refer to this elsewhere, the phrase may mean the acts of violence and injustice with which the house of Ahab was full; cf. 1 Kings xxi. The punishment of Ahab's house became proverbial, 2 Kings ix. 30 ff. Omri and Ahab are the only kings of the Northern Kingdom mentioned in the prophetic books (Cheyne).

a desolation: cf. Jer. xix. 8, xxv. 9.

an hissing: cf. Jer. xxv. 18, li. 37.

my people: read, with LXX, 'the Gentiles,' as Ezek. xxxiv. 29, xxxvi. 6. If **my people** were correct we should have to give the clause the unnatural meaning: 'ye shall bear the reproach which will come upon my people as the reward of their sins,' and we must quote, with Pusey, Ps. xliv. 13–16, lxxix. 4; Jer. li. 51; Ezek. xxxvi. 20; Hos. ix. 3; Joel ii. 17, where this reproach is referred to.

The versions agree in giving a different text of the last clause, from which Roorda renders: 'And they that fear his name have heard wisdom. He hath declared who is he that stirreth up his

7 Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the
summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage:
there is no cluster to eat; my soul desireth the firstripe
2 fig. The godly man is perished out of the earth, and
there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait
for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.
3 Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it

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rod.' The sudden change to the second person plural is very perplexing, *sc.* the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

It is to be noted that there is nothing to fix the date of this passage, nor of that which follows.

vii. 1–6, in which Jerusalem, or the prophet, or the true Israel, the Israel within Israel (Cheyne), bemoans her corrupt society. This lamentable social condition may have existed in the eighth century B.C., but it is strangely like that in Zeph. iii. 1–7: cf. Ps. xii. 1, xiv. 1; Isa. lix; Mal. ii.

1. Jerusalem is desolate like a field from which the harvest has been carried, or a vine when the grapes have been gathered and there remain only a few, stunted or rotten, in the tops of the branches. It does not refer to exile or political downfall. The city is crowded and rich; but when the good have disappeared, or become like the mere wisps and gleanings of the harvest, the population is mere prickly stubble, or a barren fig-tree.

Woe is me! Job x. 15 is the only place where the word appears. If the speaker is the prophet, he identifies himself with, and speaks to (verse 4), the guilty city.

the firstripe fig. The first figs to ripen in June are sweeter than any others (Isa. xxviii. 4; Jer. xxiv. 2; Hos. ix. 10). It is permissible, as in the margin, to understand a relative, 'nor firstripe fig which my soul desired.'

2. The godly man. The beautiful Hebrew word, *chasid*, means merciful, loyal, pious (Prov. xi. 17; applied even to God, Ps. cxlv. 17). He is the **cluster** which the prophet (or the ideal Zion) desired, and the **upright** is the firstripe fig. But he has perished, perhaps as in Isa. lvii. 1, a very close parallel, it may be, slain by the wicked.

earth: rather, 'land.'

men: *sc.* its inhabitants.

blood: the plural in the Hebrew means 'deeds of blood.'

hunt . . . with a net: Ps. xxxv. 7, lvii. 6, cxl. 5; Jer. v. 26. All Israelites were brethren, cf. Lev. xix. 18; Mal. ii. 10.

3. The text of the verse is corrupt, but the meaning is fairly clear.

diligently; the prince asketh, and the judge *is ready* for
a reward; and the great man, he uttereth the mischief
of his soul: thus they weave it together. The best of 4
them is as a brier: the most upright is *worse* than a thorn
hedge: the day of thy watchmen, even thy visitation, is
come; now shall be their perplexity. Trust ye not in 5
a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the

Their hands, &c. The words are literally 'on the evil both hands to do good.' Our R. V. is as probable a conjecture as any other.

the prince asketh, &c. Deut. xvi. 19 expressly forbids this. Cheyne supplies to 'asketh' something like this: 'the judge to shut his eyes.'

is ready: the predicate has perhaps dropped out, and should be 'judges.'

the mischief: cf. Prov. x. 3 for the word.

thus they weave it: this translation is a *tour de force.* The Hebrew words mean . . . 'he . . . and they twist it.' Probably, as Nowack suggests, a clause has fallen out after 'he,' which contained a noun, to which the 'it' refers. It may have been: 'he, *sc.* the great man, and the judge devise a mischief, and they together work it out.'

4. a brier. Probably the *solanum cordatum.* The best of the judges and princes, who should be a wall of defence to the people, is no better than a brier bush, or a thorn hedge bristling with self-importance and self-interest, scratching and tearing those it should protect. The comparison of bad men with thorns is quite natural, cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 6. This is 'sharpness' or 'sharp-dealing,' the cunning which bristles in its own defence, but is barren of fruit and shelters no life (Prof. G. A. Smith).

worse **than.** As Nowack points out, the *mem* of comparison belongs to the previous word, and we must supply *che,* 'the most upright of them is as a thorn hedge.'

thy watchmen. The people is now addressed. The watchmen are the prophets, Isa. xxi. 6; Jer. vi. 17; Ezek. iii. 17, xxxiii. 7; Hab. ii. 1. The day is that foretold by the prophets.

thy visitation looks like a gloss inserted to explain what **the day of thy watchmen** meant.

now: as Amos vi. 7.

their: refers to the prince and the judge.

perplexity: so Isa. xxii. 5.

5. Social iniquity finally breaks the ties of friendship and the family. To admit selfishness at all is to contract a disease which

doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.
6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth
up against her mother, the daughter in law against her
mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own
house.
7 But as for me, I will look unto the LORD; I will wait
for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

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enters and slowly poisons the whole system. The progress of the disease would be better marked if we rendered: 'Trust ye not in a companion, put ye not confidence in a friend' (the true meaning of the word rendered **guide**), &c. The wife is the last of the series; the disease is at its height when even she betrays you.

6. dishonoureth: *lit.* treateth as a fool, Deut. xxxii. 15, rendered 'lightly esteemed'; Jer. xiv. 21; Nahum iii. 6.

the men of his own house: *sc.* the servants, Gen. xvii. 23, 27, xxxix. 14; 2 Sam. xii. 17; Job xix. 15. Our Lord used this language for quite another occasion (Matt. x. 35; Luke xii. 53).

The passage breaks off abruptly. 'Between verse 6 and verse 7,' says Wellhausen, 'yawns a century.' Pusey, following the A. V., tries to bring out a connexion between the passages. But vi. 9—vii. 6 refers to the state flourishing and wicked, vii. 7–20 refers to an exile which has actually come. The speaker may still be the Israel in Israel, with whom we meet in the second Isaiah.

vii. 7–20. This closing passage is a mingled cry of confession, prayer, and thanksgiving. The speaker is Israel; the mouthpiece is the prophet. It might be a cento of fragments, one from the days of the Syrian wars, one from the dread day of the fall of Jerusalem, others from the Exile. Which is Micah's, and which is the language of other prophets inserted later on, we cannot, nor need we, determine. It is one of those Divine passages in Scripture, the heart-throb, the spiritual intensity, the religious quality of which make it quite immaterial when or how they were produced. Enough that the Spirit of God is breathing in it, and eyes lit with smiles, and wet with tears, are lifted up to Him. The passage ranks with the wonderful second part of Isaiah.

7. look unto: rather, 'look for'; cf. Ps. xxvii. 8; Isa. xvii. 10.

will wait for: the Hebrew word is almost appropriated to this waiting for God and His mercies. Ps. xlii. 6, 12, xliii. 5, cxxx. 5 (translated 'hope for'); 2 Kings vi. 33; Lam. iii. 24, &c.

God of my salvation: this beautiful title is in Ps. xviii. 46, xxv. 5, xxvii. 9; Hab. iii. 18; and cf. Ps. xxiv. 5, lxii. 7, lxv. 5, lxxix. 9, lxxxv. 4, xcv. 1; Isa. xvii. 10.

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I 8
shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be
a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the 9
LORD, because I have sinned against him; until he plead
my cause, and execute judgement for me: he will bring
me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.
Then mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover 10
her; which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God?
Mine eyes shall behold her; now shall she be trodden
down as the mire of the streets. A day for building thy 11

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8. mine enemy: feminine collective; e. g. Babylon. For this malignant rejoicing cf. Ps. xxxv. 19, 24, xxxviii. 16; Obad. 12.

sit in darkness: Amos v. 18; Isa. ix. 1, xlii. 7, lx. 1; the light is Yahweh's promise, Ps. xxvii. 1. 'There is a bud of morning in midnight' (Keats).

9. The heathen were instruments of God in punishing Israel; but they overstep the mark when they think to destroy as well as to chastise, Isa. x. 5; Hab. i. 11.

I will bear the indignation: so all penitents feel, 1 Sam. iii. 18; 2 Sam. xvi. 10; Lam. iii. 29.

his righteousness: i. e. vindication; when Yahweh has entered into a covenant it is only right for Him to fulfil it.

10. enemy: as verse 8.

shame shall cover her: Obad. 10; Ezek. vii. 18.

Where is the LORD: the familiar gibe, Ps. lxxix. 10, cxv. 2; Joel ii. 17.

mire of the streets: Isa. x. 6.

vii. 11–13. Suddenly the prophet turns and addresses Israel (masculine, not feminine as before) who had been speaking; or of course it may be a fragment from another source introduced here. It sounds like a contemporary of Zech. x. 10. It points to a time after the Babylonian Exile, for the return is not from Babylon, but from widely scattered countries and regions.

11. A day for building: we seem suddenly transferred into the days of Nehemiah (Neh. i.; Ezek. iv. 7). The text is disturbed; and the meaning of the decree is very obscure (cf. Zeph. ii. 2). Cheyne says the **walls** are those of a vineyard, not of a city; cf. Isa. v. 5. Wellhausen and Prof. G. A. Smith follow the LXX in drawing the second **that day** into verse 11. Nowack gives up the clause about the decree as unintelligible,

12 walls! in that day shall the decree be far removed. In
that day shall they come unto thee, from Assyria and the
cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and
13 from sea to sea, and *from* mountain to mountain. Yet
shall the land be desolate because of them that dwell
therein, for the fruit of their doings.

but Prof. G. A. Smith thinks *chōḳ* may mean 'border.' Thus we get:—

'A day for building thy walls is that day;
Thy border shall be broader that day.' Cf. Isa. xxxiii. 17.

12. Some words must have fallen out. And to get any sense we must change two words, and we must correct the gender of **thee** to bring it into harmony with verse 11. Thus we get the sense: 'And to thee shall come (*sc.* the returning captivity) from Assyria and unto Egypt (*lit.* Strong-land)[1], and from Egypt and unto the River, and to sea from sea, and to mountain from mountain' (from Sinai in the south to Lebanon in the north (?), cf. Ps. lxxii. 8). The River in this case, though it is the word specially used for the Nile, must mean the Euphrates; and the whole paragraph describes the horizon of Palestine from Assyria on the north to Egypt on the south, from Mesopotamia east and the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean west (cf. Isa. xi. 11, xxvii. 13; Hos. xi. 11; Amos ix. 11).

We are carried into a time long after Nehemiah. Indeed, the prophecy remains yet unfulfilled in its literalness and its entirety, as Isa. xix. 23–25.

13. It is difficult to connect this verse naturally with the preceding[2], for there is no **Yet**, but simply 'And,' unless, with Wellhausen, we may take **the land** to be 'the earth,' viz. all the heathen world, with the exception of Israel (cf. Jer. xxxii. 20). To refer back to vi. 9—vii. 6 would be to rob vii. 7–12 of all its

[1] Mazor, instead of Mizraim, the usual name of Egypt, as in Isa. xix. 6, xxxvii. 25.

[2] Pusey says: 'Yet it was all fulfilled in the letter as well as in spirit. Jerusalem was restored, the people was gathered, first from the Captivity, then to Christ; and yet the land was again desolate through the fruit of their doings, who rejected Christ, and is so until this day.' But it is one thing, by ignoring time and the distance of events, to find 'fulfilments' of obscure prophecies in the long range of history, and quite another to trace out the meaning of the prophet's oracles, as they appeared to him. The former method has its uses, and is justified by the manner in which the N. T. quotes from the Old; but the latter method is the only one which sober exegesis can attempt.

Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine 14
heritage, which dwell solitarily, in the forest in the midst
of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in
the days of old. As in the days of thy coming forth out 15
of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous
things. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all 16
their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth,

beautiful meaning. What use is the return from exile if the land is still to be desolate? But verse 13 may be a fragment from another connexion.

14. The prophet prays for his people to the Shepherd of Israel (cf. Gen. xlix. 24; Ps. xxiii. 1, lxxx. 1). The shepherd's staff (Lev. xxvii. 32; Ps. xxiii. 4) the prophet resigns to the great Shepherd.

dwell solitarily, in the forest. The word **Carmel** is better taken in its literal meaning, 'fruitful field' (as ■ Kings xix. 23; Isa. xxxvii. 24), and not as the mountain of that name. Then the phrase describes the forlorn condition of Israel at the time that the prayer was offered: 'that dwell solitarily in the wilderness in the midst of the fruit-field.' Nowack thinks it describes the people who returned from the Exile to find their fields in the possession of others. And he strengthens his argument by noting that the aspiration is to get back to Bashan and Gilead, *sc.* on the other side Jordan. If the standpoint were the Babylonian Exile, it would be the land west of Jordan which the people would desire to recover. Cheyne gives a curious meaning to **solitarily.** It refers, he thinks, to the condition of Israel's mission as a nation set apart, Num. xxiii. 9; Deut. xxxiii. 28. It is clear that **as in the days of old** would be quite unsuitable on Micah's lips; in his day Bashan and Gilead still belonged to Israel. To refer it to the days of David, with Cheyne, is strained, because it was not only in those golden days that the people dwelt in Bashan and Gilead. Everything points therefore to this prayer dating from the latest period of Israel's history, the days of Haggai and Zephaniah.

15. This verse should be a continuation of the prayer. Make the verb imperative: 'As in the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt, show us wonders' (Exod. iii. 20, xv. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 11).

16. Such wonders would put the nations to shame again, as of old.

ashamed of: Hos. iv. 19.

hand upon their mouth: in astonishment or reverence, Judges xviii. 19; Job xxi. 5.

17 their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like
a serpent; like crawling things of the earth they shall
come trembling out of their close places: they shall
come with fear unto the LORD our God, and shall be
18 afraid because of thee. Who is a God like unto thee,
that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression
of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his
19 anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will
turn again and have compassion upon us; he will tread
our iniquities under foot: and thou wilt cast all their
20 sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the
truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou
hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

---

deaf: *sc.* with the thunder of His might, Job xxvi. 14; Isa. xxxiii. 3.

17. like a serpent: Gen. iii. 14; the sign of submission to Yahweh, Isa. xlix. 23.

close places: i. e. fastnesses; cf. Ps. xviii. 45.

vii. 18–20. A hymn of praise to the Lord who works such a deliverance: cf. Exod. xv. 1–18; Isa. xii. 1–6. For special phrases cf. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Ps. ciii. 9, cv. 9, 10; Isa. lvii. 16; Jer. iii. 5, l. 20; Joel ii. 13.

18. Who is . . . like: Exod. xv. 11. The name Micah means 'Who is like Yahweh?'

that pardoneth: Exod. xxxiv. 7.

passeth by: Prov. xix. 11.

19. will turn again: Hos. xiv. 8.

tread . . . under foot: as something worthless which is not to be thought of again.

their sins: read, 'our sins,' so LXX, Pesh., Vulg.

depths of the sea: like Exod. xv. 5, 10.

20. truth and **mercy:** the substance of the promises Exod. xxxiv. 6; Num. xxv. 12.

Jacob and **Abraham:** for the people who are their descendants cf. Isa. xli. 8.

hast sworn: as in Gen. xxii. 16. There is not room therefore, with Cheyne, to see here the belief that the Fathers, Abraham and Jacob, still live unto God. That belief had to wait for our Lord's authoritative teaching, Luke xvi. 25–31; John viii. 56.

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